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Editor of "The Expositor"

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1900

THE GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO

ST. MARK.

BY THE VERY REV.

G. A. CHADWICK, D.D.,

Dean of Armagh,

AUTHOR OF "CHRIST BEARING WITNESS TO HIMSELF," "AS HE THAT SEWETH," ETC.

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CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL.

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Even as it is written in Isaiah the prophet, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way; The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight; John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the country of Judæa, and all they of Jerusalem; and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leathern girdle about his loins, and did eat locusts and wild honey."—MARK i. 1–6 (R.V.).

THE opening of St. Mark's Gospel is energetic and full of character. St. Matthew traces for Jews the pedigree of their Messiah; St. Luke's worldwide sympathies linger with the maiden who bore Jesus, and the village of His boyhood; and St. John's theology proclaims the Divine origin of the Eternal Lord. But St. Mark trusts the public acts of the Mighty Worker to do for the reader what they did for those who first "beheld His glory." How He came to earth can safely be left untold: what He was will appear by what He wrought. It is enough to record, with matchless vividness, the toils, the energy, the love and wrath, the defeat and triumph of the brief career which changed the world. It will prove itself to be the career of "the Son of God."

In so deciding, he followed the example of the Apostolic teaching. The first vacant place among the

Twelve was filled by an eye-witness, competent to tell what Jesus did "from the baptism of John to the day when He was received up," the very space covered by this Gospel. That "Gospel of peace," which Cornelius heard from St. Peter (and hearing, received the Holy Ghost) was the same story of Jesus "after the baptism which John preached." And this is throughout the substance of the primitive teaching. The Apostles act as men who believe that everything necessary to salvation is (implicit or explicit) in the history of those few crowded years. Therefore this is "the gospel."

Men there are who judge otherwise, and whose gospel is not the story of salvation wrought, but the plan of salvation applied, how the Atonement avails for us, how men are converted, and what privileges they then receive. But in truth men are not converted by preaching conversion, any more than citizens are made loyal by demanding loyalty. Show men their prince, and convince them that he is gracious and truly royal, and they will die for him. Show them the Prince of Life, and He, being lifted up, will draw all men unto Him; and thus the truest gospel is that which declares Christ and Him crucified. As all science springs from the phenomena of the external world, so do theology and religion spring from the life of Him who was too adorable to be mortal, and too loving to be disobeyed.

Therefore St. Paul declares that the gospel which he preached to the Corinthians and by which they were saved, was, that Christ died for our sins and was buried and rose again, and was seen of sufficient witnesses (1 Cor. xv. 1-8).

And therefore St. Mark is contented with a very brief record of those wondrous years; a few facts, chosen

with a keen sense of the intense energy and burning force which they reveal, are what he is inspired to call the gospel.

He presently uses the word in a somewhat larger sense, telling how Jesus Himself, before the story of His life could possibly be unfolded, preached as "the gospel of God" that "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand," and added (what St. Mark only has preserved for us), "Repent, and believe in the gospel" (i. 14-15). So too it is part of St. Paul's "gospel" that God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Rom. ii. 16). For this also is good news of God, "the gospel of the kingdom." And like "the gospel of Jesus Christ," it treats of His attitude toward us, more than ours toward Him, which latter is the result rather than the substance of it. That He rules, and not the devil; that we shall answer at last to Him and to none lower; that Satan lied when he claimed to possess all the kingdoms of the earth, and to dispose of them; that Christ has now received from far different hands "all power on earth"; this is a gospel which the world has not yet learned to welcome, nor the Church fully to proclaim.

Now the scriptural use of this term is quite as important to religious emotion as to accuracy of thought. All true emotions hide their fountain too deep for self-consciousness to find. We feel best when our feeling is forgotten. Not while we think about finding peace, but while we approach God as a Father, and are anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make known our requests, is it promised that the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard our hearts and our thoughts (Phil. iv. 7). And many a soul of the righteous, whom

faith in the true gospel fills with trembling adoration, is made sad by the inflexible demand for certain realised personal experiences as the title to recognition as a Christian. That great title belonged at the first to all who would learn of Jesus: the disciples were called Christians. To acquaint ourselves with Him, that is to be at peace.

Meantime, we observe that the new movement which now begins is not, like Judaism, a law which brings death; nor like Buddhism, a path in which one must walk as best he may: it differs from all other systems in being essentially the announcement of good tidings from above.

Yet "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" is a profound agitation and widespread alarm. Lest the soothing words of Jesus should blend like music with the slumber of sinners at ease in Zion, John came preaching repentance, and what is more, a baptism of repentance; not such a lustration as was most familiar to the Mosaic law, administered by the worshipper to himself, but an ablution at other hands, a confession that one is not only soiled, but soiled beyond all cleansing of his own. Formal Judaism was one long struggle for self-purification. The dawn of a new system is visible in the movement of all Judæa towards one who bids them throw every such hope away, and come to him for the baptism of repentance, and expect a Greater One, who shall baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire. And the true function of the predicted herald, the best levelling of the rugged ways of humanity for the Promised One to traverse, was in this universal diffusion of the sense of sin. For Christ was not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

In truth, the movement of the Baptist, with its double aspect, gathers up all the teaching of the past. He produced conviction, and he promised help. One lesson of all sacred history is universal failure. The innocence of Eden cannot last. The law with its promise of life to the man who doeth these things, issued practically in the knowledge of sin; it entered that sin might abound; it made a formal confession of universal sin, year by year, continually. And therefore its fitting close was a baptism of repentance universally accepted. Alas, not universally. For while we read of all the nation swayed by one impulse, and rushing to the stern teacher who had no share in its pleasures or its luxuries, whose life was separated from its concerns, and whose food was the simplest that could sustain existence, yet we know that when they heard how deep his censures pierced, and how unsparingly he scourged their best loved sins, the loudest professors of religion rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of Him. Nevertheless, by coming to Him, they also had pleaded guilty. Something they needed; they were sore at heart, and would have welcomed any soothing balm, although they refused the surgeon's knife.

The law did more than convict men; it inspired hope. The promise of a Redeemer shone like a rainbow across the dark story of the past. He was the end of all the types, at once the Victim and the Priest. To Him gave all the prophets witness, and the Baptist brought all past attainment to its full height, and was "more than a prophet" when he announced the actual presence of the Christ, when he pointed out to the first two Apostles, the Lamb of God.

AT THE JORDAN.

"And he preached, saying, There cometh after me He that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I baptized you with water; but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost. And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon Him: and a voice came out of the heavens, Thou art My Beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased."—MARK i. 7–11 (R.V.).

It was when all men mused in their hearts whether John was the Christ or no, that he announced the coming of a Stronger One. By thus promptly silencing a whisper, so honourable to himself, he showed how strong he really was, and how unselfish "a friend of the Bridegroom." Nor was this the vague humility of phrase which is content to be lowly in general, so long as no specified individual stands higher. His word is definite, and accepts much for himself. "The Stronger One than I cometh," and it is in presence of the might of Jesus (whom yet this fiery reformer called a Lamb), that he feels himself unworthy to bend to the dust and unbind the latchets or laces of his shoe.

So then, though asceticism be sometimes good, it is consciously not the highest nor the most effective goodness. Perhaps it is the most impressive. Without a miracle, the preaching of John shook the nation as widely as that of Jesus melted it, and prepared men's hearts for His. A king consulted and feared him. And when the Pharisees were at open feud with Jesus, they feared to be stoned if they should pronounce John's baptism to be of men.

Yet is there weakness lurking even in the very

quality which gives asceticism its power. That stern seclusion from an evil world, that peremptory denial of its charms, why are they so impressive? Because they set an example to those who are hard beset, of the one way of escape, the cutting off of the hand and foot, the plucking out of the eye. And our Lord enjoins such mutilation of the life upon those whom its gifts betray. Yet is it as the halt and maimed that such men enter into life. The ascetic is a man who needs to sternly repress and deny his impulses, who is conscious of traitors within his breast that may revolt if the enemy be suffered to approach too near.

It is harder to be a holy friend of publicans and sinners, a witness for God while eating and drinking with these, than to remain in the desert undefiled. It is greater to convert a sinful woman in familiar converse by the well, than to shake trembling multitudes by threats of the fire for the chaff and the axe for the barren tree. And John confessed this. In the supreme moment of his life, he added his own confession to that of all his nation. This rugged ascetic had need to be baptized of Him who came eating and drinking.

Nay, he taught that all his work was but superficial, a baptism with water to reach the surface of men's life, to check, at the most, exaction and violence and neglect of the wants of others, while the Greater One should baptize with the Holy Ghost, should pierce the depths of human nature, and throughly purge His floor.

Nothing could refute more clearly than our three simple narratives, the sceptical notion that Jesus yielded for awhile to the dominating influence of the Baptist. Only from the Gospels can we at all connect the two. And what we read here is, that before Jesus

came, John expected his Superior; that when they met, John declared his own need to be baptized of Him, that he, nevertheless, submitted to the will of Jesus, and thereupon heard a voice from the heavens which must for ever have destroyed all notion of equality; that afterwards he only saw Jesus at a distance, and made a confession which transferred two of his disciples to our Lord.

The criticism which transforms our Lord's part in these events to that of a pupil is far more wilful than would be tolerated in dealing with any other record. And it too palpably springs from the need to find some human inspiration for the Word of God, some candle from which the Sun of Righteousness took fire, if one would escape the confession that He is not of this world.

But here we meet a deeper question: Not why Jesus accepted baptism from an inferior, but why, being sinless, He sought for a baptism of repentance. How is this act consistent with absolute and stainless purity?

Now it sometimes lightens a difficulty to find that it is not occasional nor accidental, but wrought deep into the plan of a consistent work. And the Gospels are consistent in representing the innocence of Jesus as refusing immunity from the consequences of guilt. He was circumcised, and His mother then paid the offering commanded by the law, although both these actions spoke of defilement. In submitting to the likeness of sinful flesh He submitted to its conditions. He was present at feasts in which national confessions led up to sacrifice, and the sacrificial blood was sprinkled to make atonement for the children of Israel, because of all their sins. When He tasted death itself, which passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, He

carried out to the utmost the same stern rule to which at His baptism He consciously submitted. Nor will any theory of His atonement suffice, which is content with believing that His humiliations and sufferings, though inevitable, were only collateral results of contact with our fallen race. Baptism was avoidable, and that without any compromise of His influence, since the Pharisees refused it with impunity, and John would fain have exempted Him. Here at least He was not "entangled in the machinery," but deliberately turned the wheels upon Himself. And this is the more impressive because, in another aspect of affairs, He claimed to be out of the reach of ceremonial defilement, and touched without reluctance disease, leprosy and the dead.

Humiliating and penal consequences of sin, to these He bowed His head. Yet to a confession of personal taint, never. And all the accounts agree that He never was less conscience-stricken than when He shared the baptism of repentance. St. Matthew implies, what St. Luke plainly declares, that He did not come to baptism along with the crowds of penitents, but separately. And at the point where all others made confession, in the hour when even the Baptist, although filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, had need to be baptized, He only felt the propriety, the fitness of fulfilling all righteousness. That mighty task was not even a yoke to Him, it was an instinct like that of beauty to an artist, it was what became Him.

St. Mark omits even this evidence of sinlessness. His energetic method is like that of a great commander, who seizes at all costs the vital point upon the battle field. He constantly omits what is subordinate (although very conscious of the power of graphic

details), when by so doing he can force the central thought upon the mind. Here he concentrates our attention upon the witness from above, upon the rending asunder of the heavens which unfold all their heights over a bended head, upon the visible descent of the Holy Spirit in His fulness, upon the voice from the heavens which pealed through the souls of these two peerless worshippers, and proclaimed that He who had gone down to the baptismal flood was no sinner to be forgiven, but the beloved Son of God, in whom He is well pleased.

That is our Evangelist's answer to all misunderstanding of the rite, and it is enough.

How do men think of heaven? Perhaps only as a remote point in space, where flames a material and solid structure into which it is the highest bliss to enter. A place there must be to which the Body of our Lord ascended and whither He shall yet lead home His followers in spiritual bodies to be with Him where He is. If, however, only this be heaven, we should hold that in the revolutions of the solar system it hung just then vertically above the Jordan, a few fathoms or miles aloft. But we also believe in a spiritual city, in which the pillars are living saints, an all-embracing blessedness and rapture and depth of revelation, whereinto holy mortals in their highest moments have been "caught up," a heaven whose angels ascend and descend upon the Son of man. In this hour of highest consecration, these heavens were thrown open—rent asunder—for the gaze of our Lord and of the Baptist. They were opened again when the first martyr died. And we read that what eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor heart conceived of the preparation of God for them that love Him, He hath

already revealed to them by His Spirit. To others there is only cloud or "the infinite azure," as to the the crowd by the Jordan and the murderers of Stephen.

Now it is to be observed that we never read of Jesus being caught up into heaven for a space, like St. Paul or St. John. What we read is, that while on earth the Son of man is in Heaven (John iii. 13),* for heaven is the manifestation of God, whose truest glory was revealed in the grace and truth of Jesus.

Along with this revelation, the Holy Spirit was manifested wondrously. His appearance, indeed, is quite unlike what it was to others. At Pentecost He became visible, but since each disciple received only a portion, "according to his several ability," his fitting symbol was "tongues parting asunder like as of fire." He came as an element powerful and pervasive, not as a Personality bestowed in all His vital force on any one.

So, too, the phrase which John used, when predicting that Jesus should baptize with the Holy Ghost, slightly though it differs from what is here, implies † that only a portion is to be given, not the fulness. And the angel who foretold to Zacharias that John himself should be filled with the Holy Ghost, conveyed the same limitation in his words. John received all that he was able to receive: he was filled. But how should mortal capacity exhaust the fulness of Deity? And Who is this, upon Whom, while John is but an awe-stricken beholder, the Spirit of God descends in all completeness, a living organic unity, like a dove? Only the Infinite is capable of receiving such a gift, and this

* Cf. the admirable note in Archdeacon Watkins' "Commentary on John."

† By the absence of the article in the Greek.

is He in Whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. No wonder then that "in bodily form" as a dove, the Spirit of God descended upon Him alone. Henceforward He became the great Dispenser, and "the Spirit emanated from Him as perfume from the rose when it has opened."

At the same time was heard a Voice from heaven. And the bearing of this passage upon the Trinity becomes clear, when we combine the manifestation of the Spirit in living Personality, and the Divine Voice, not from the Dove but from the heavens, with the announcement that Jesus is not merely beloved and well-pleasing, but a Son, and in this high sense the only Son, since the words are literally "Thou art the Son of Me, the beloved." And yet He is to bring many sons unto glory.

Is it consistent with due reverence to believe that this voice conveyed a message to our Lord Himself? Even so liberal a critic as Neander has denied this. But if we grasp the meaning of what we believe, that He upon taking flesh "emptied Himself," that He increased in wisdom during His youth, and that there was a day and hour which to the end of life He knew not, we need not suppose that His infancy was so unchildlike as the realisation of His mysterious and awful Personality would make it. There must then have been a period when His perfect human development rose up into what Renan calls (more accurately than he knows) identification of Himself with the object of His devotion, carried to the utmost limit. Nor is this period quite undiscoverable, for when it arrived it would seem highly unnatural to postpone His public ministry further. Now this reasonable inference is entirely supported by the narrative. St. Matthew

indeed regards the event from the Baptist's point of vision. But St. Mark and St. Luke are agreed that to Jesus Himself it was also said, "*Thou* art My beloved Son." Now this is not the way to teach us that the testimony came only to John. And how solemn a thought is this, that the full certitude of His destiny expanded before the eyes of Jesus, just when He lifted them from those baptismal waters in which He stooped so low.

THE TEMPTATION.

"And straightway the Spirit driveth Him forth into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan; and He was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him."—MARK i. 12, 13 (R.V.).

ST. MARK has not recorded the details of our Lord's temptations, and lays more stress upon the duration of the struggle, than the nature of the last and crowning assaults. But he is careful, like the others, to connect it closely with the baptism of Jesus, and the miraculous testimony then borne to Him.

It is indeed instructive that He should have suffered this affront, immediately upon being recognised as the Messiah. But the explanation will not be found in the notion, which Milton has popularised, that only now Satan was assured of the urgent necessity for attacking Him:

> "That heard the adversary . . . and with the voice Divine
> Nigh thunderstruck, the exalted Man, to whom
> Such high attest was given, awhile surveyed
> With wonder."

As if Satan forgot the marvels of the sacred infancy. As if the spirits who attack all could have failed to identify, after thirty years of defeat, the Greater One

whom the Baptist had everywhere proclaimed. No. But Satan admirably chose the time for a supreme effort. High places are dizzy, and especially when one has just attained them; and therefore it was when the voice of the herald and the Voice from the heavens were blended in acclaim, that the Evil One tried all his arts. He had formerly plunged Elijah into despair and a desire to die, immediately after fire from heaven responded to the prophet's prayer. Soon after this, he would degrade Peter to be his mouthpiece, just when his noblest testimony was borne, and the highest approval of his Lord was won. In the flush of their triumphs he found his best opportunity; but Jesus remained unflushed, and met the first recorded temptation, in the full consciousness of Messiahship, by quoting the words which spoke to every man alike, and as man.

It is a lesson which the weakest needs to learn, for little victories can intoxicate little men.

It is easy then to see why the recorded temptations insist upon the exceptional dignity of Christ, and urge Him to seize its advantages, while He insists on bearing the common burden, and proves Himself greatest by becoming least of all. The sharp contrast between His circumstances and His rank drove the temptations deep into His consciousness, and wounded His sensibilities, though they failed to shake His will.

How unnatural that the Son of God should lack and suffer hunger, how right that He should challenge recognition, how needful (though now His sacred Personality is cunningly allowed to fall somewhat into the background) that He should obtain armies and splendour.

This explains the possibility of temptation in a sinless nature, which indeed can only be denied by assuming that sin is part of the original creation. Not because we are sinful, but because we are flesh and blood (of which He became partaker), when we feel the pains of hunger we are attracted by food, at whatever price it is offered. In truth, no man is allured by sin, but only by the bait and bribe of sin, except perhaps in the last stages of spiritual decomposition.

Now, just as the bait allures, and not the jaws of the trap, so the power of a temptation is not its wickedness, not the guilty service, but the proffered recompense; and this appeals to the most upright man, equally with the most corrupt. Thus the stress of a temptation is to be measured by our gravitation, not towards the sin, but towards the pleasure or advantage which is entangled with that. And this may be realised even more powerfully by a man of keen feeling and vivid imagination who does not falter, than by a grosser nature which succumbs.

Now Jesus was a perfect man. To His exquisite sensibilities, which had neither inherited nor contracted any blemish, the pain of hunger at the opening of His ministry, and the horror of the cross at its close, were not less intense, but sharper than to ours. And this pain and horror measured the temptation to evade them. The issue never hung in the scales; even to hesitate would have been to forfeit the delicate bloom of absolute sinlessness; but, none the less, the decision was costly, the temptation poignant.

St. Mark has given us no details; but there is immense and compressed power in the assertion, only his, that the temptation lasted all through the forty

days. We know the power of an unremitting pressure, an incessant importunity, a haunting thought. A very trifling annoyance, long protracted, drives men to strange remedies. And the remorseless urgency of Satan may be measured by what St. Matthew tells us, that only after the forty days Jesus became aware of the pains of hunger. Perhaps the assertion that He was with the wild beasts may throw some ray of light upon the nature of the temptation. There is no intimation of bodily peril. On the other hand it seems incredible that what is hinted is His own consciousness of the supernatural dignity from which

> "The fiery serpent fled, and noxious worm;
> The lion and fierce tiger glared aloof."

Such a consciousness would have relieved the strain of which their presence is evidently a part. Nay, but the oppressive solitude, the waste region so unlike His blooming Nazareth, and the ferocity of the brute creation, all would conspire to suggest those dread misgivings and questionings which are provoked by "the something that infects the world."

Surely we may believe that He Who was tempted at all points like as we are, felt now the deadly chill which falls upon the soul from the shadow of our ruined earth. In our nature He bore the assault and overcame. And then His human nature condescended to accept help, such as ours receives, from the ministering spirits which are sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation. So perfectly was He made like unto His brethren.

THE EARLY PREACHING AND THE FIRST DISCIPLES.

"Now after that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel. And passing along by the sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they left the nets, and followed Him. And going on a little further, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending the nets. And straightway He called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him."—MARK i. 14–20 (R.V.).

ST. MARK has shown us the Baptist proclaiming Christ. He now tells us that when John was imprisoned, Jesus, turning from that Judean ministry which stirred the jealousy of John's disciples (John iii. 26), "came into Galilee, preaching." And one looks twice before observing that His teaching is a distinct advance upon the herald's. Men are still to repent; for however slightly modern preachers may heal the hurt of souls, real contrition is here taken over into the gospel scheme. But the time which was hitherto said to be at hand is now fulfilled. And they are not only to believe the gospel, but to "believe in it." Reliance, the effort of the soul by which it ceases equally to be self-confident and to despair, confiding itself to some word which is a gospel, or some being who has salvation to bestow, that is belief in its object. And it is highly important to observe that faith is thus made prominent so early in our Lord's teaching. The vitalizing power of faith was no discovery of St. Paul; it was not evolved by devout meditation after Jesus had passed from view, nor introduced into His system when opposition forced Him to bind men to Him in a

stronger allegiance. The power of faith is implied in His earliest preaching, and it is connected with His earliest miracles. But no such phrase as the power of faith is ever used. Faith is precious only as it leans on what is trustworthy. And it is produced, not by thinking of faith itself, but of its proper object. Therefore Christ did not come preaching faith, but preaching the gospel of God, and bidding men believe in that.

Shall we not follow His example? It is morally certain that Abraham never heard of salvation by faith, yet he was justified by faith when he believed in Him Who justifieth the ungodly. To preach Him, and His gospel, is the way to lead men to be saved by faith.

Few things are more instructive to consider than the slow, deliberate, yet firm steps by which Christ advanced to the revelation of God in flesh. Thirty years of silence, forty days of seclusion after heaven had proclaimed Him, leisurely intercourse with Andrew and John, Peter and Nathanael, and then a brief ministry in a subject nation, and chiefly in a despised province. It is not the action of a fanatic. It exactly fulfils His own description of the kingdom which He proclaimed, which was to exhibit first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. And it is a lesson to all time, that the boldest expectations possible to faith do not justify feverish haste and excited longings for immediate prominence or immediate success. The husbandman who has long patience with the seed is not therefore hopeless of the harvest.

Passing by the sea of Galilee, Jesus finds two fishermen at their toil, and bids them follow Him. Both are men of decided and earnest character; one is to become the spokesman and leader of the Apostolic band, and the little which is recorded of the other indicates the

same temperament, somewhat less developed. Our Lord now calls upon them to take a decided step. But here again we find traces of the same deliberate progression, the same absence of haste, as in His early preaching. He does not, as unthinking readers fancy, come upon two utter strangers, fascinate and arrest them in a moment, and sweep their lives into the vortex of His own. Andrew had already heard the Baptist proclaim the Lamb of God, had followed Jesus home, and had introduced his brother, to whom Jesus then gave the new name Cephas. Their faith had since been confirmed by miracles. The demands of our Lord may be trying, but they are never unreasonable, and the faith He claims is not a blind credulity.

Nor does He, even now, finally and entirely call them away from their occupation. Some time is still to elapse, and a sign, especially impressive to fishermen, the miraculous draught of fishes, is to burn into their minds a profound sense of their unworthiness, before the vocation now promised shall arrive. Then He will say, From henceforth ye shall catch men : now He says, I will prepare you for that future, I will make you to become fishers of men. So ungrounded is the suspicion of any confusion between the stories of the three steps by which they rose to their Apostleship.

A little further on, He finds the two sons of Zebedee, and calls them also. John had almost certainly been the companion of Andrew when he followed Jesus home, and his brother had become the sharer of his hopes. And if there were any hesitation, the example of their comrades helped them to decide—so soon, so inevitably does each disciple begin to be a fisher of other men—and leaving their father, as we are gracefully told, not desolate, but with servants, they also follow Jesus.

Thus He asks, from each group, the sacrifice involved in following Him at an inconvenient time. The first are casting their nets and eager in their quest. The others are mending their nets, perhaps after some large draught had broken them. So Levi was sitting at the receipt of toll. Not one of the Twelve was chosen to that high rank when idle.

Very charming, very powerful still is the spell by which Christ drew His first apostles to His side. Not yet are they told anything of thrones on which they are to sit and judge the tribes of Israel, or that their names shall be engraven on the foundations of the heavenly city besides being great on earth while the world stands. For them, the capture of men was less lucrative than that of fish, and less honourable, for they suffered the loss of all things and were made as the filth of the earth. To learn Christ's art, to be made helpful in drawing souls to Him, following Jesus and catching men, this was enough to attract His first ministers; God grant that a time may never come when ministers for whom this is enough, shall fail. Where the spirit of self devotion is absent how can the Spirit of Christ exist?

TEACHING WITH AUTHORITY.

"And they go into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day He entered into the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching: for He taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes."—MARK i. 21, 22 (R.V.).

THE worship of the synagogues, not having been instituted by Moses, but gradually developed by the public need, was comparatively free and unconventional. Sometimes it happened that remarkable and

serious-looking strangers were invited, if they had any word of exhortation, to say on (Acts xiii. 15). Sometimes one presented himself, as the custom of our Lord was (Luke iv. 16). Amid the dull mechanical tendencies which were then turning the heart of Judaism to stone, the synagogue may have been often a centre of life and rallying-place of freedom. In Galilee, where such worship predominated over that of the remote Temple and its hierarchy, Jesus found His trusted followers and the nucleus of the Church. In foreign lands, St. Paul bore first to his brethren in their synagogues the strange tidings that their Messiah had expired upon a cross. And before His rupture with the chiefs of Judaism, the synagogues were fitting places for our Lord's early teaching. He made use of the existing system, and applied it, just as we have seen Him use the teaching of the Baptist as a starting-point for His own. And this ought to be observed, that Jesus revolutionized the world by methods the furthest from being revolutionary. The institutions of His age and land were corrupt well-nigh to the core, but He did not therefore make a clean sweep, and begin again. He did not turn His back on the Temple and synagogues, nor outrage sabbaths, nor come to destroy the law and the prophets. He bade His followers reverence the seat where the scribes and Pharisees sat, and drew the line at their false lives and perilous examples. Amid that evil generation He found soil wherein His seed might germinate, and was content to hide His leaven in the lump where it should gradually work out its destiny. In so doing He was at one with Providence, which had slowly evolved the convictions of the Old Testament, spending centuries upon the process. Now the power which belongs to such moderation has

scarcely been recognised until these latter days. The political sagacity of Somers and Burke, and the ecclesiastical wisdom of our own reformers, had their occult and unsuspected fountains in the method by which Jesus planted the kingdom which came not with observation. But who taught the Carpenter? It is therefore significant that all the Gospels of the Galilean ministry connect our Lord's early teaching with the synagogue.

St. Mark is by no means the evangelist of the discourses. And this adds to the interest with which we find him indicate, with precise exactitude, the first great difference that would strike the hearers of Christ between His teaching and that of others. He taught with authority, and not as the scribes. Their doctrine was built with dreary and irrational ingenuity, upon perverted views of the old law. The shape of a Hebrew letter, words whereof the initals would spell some important name, wire-drawn inferences, astounding allusions, ingenuity such as men waste now upon the number of the beast and the measurement of a pyramid, these were the doctrine of the scribes.

And an acute observer would remark that the authority of Christ's teaching was peculiar in a farther-reaching sense. If, as seems clear, Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said" (not "by," but) "to them of old time, but I say unto you," He then claimed the place, not of Moses who heard the Divine Voice, but of Him Who spoke. Even if this could be doubted, the same spirit is elsewhere unmistakable. The tables which Moses brought were inscribed by the finger of Another: none could make him the Supreme arbitrator while overhead the trumpet waxed louder and louder, while the fiery pillar marshalled their journeying, while

the mysterious Presence consecrated the mysterious shrine. Prophet after prophet opened and closed his message with the words, "Thus saith the Lord." . . . "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Jesus was content with the attestation, "Verily, I say unto you." Blessed as a wise builder was the hearer and doer of "these words of Mine." Everywhere in His teaching the centre of authority is personal. He distinctly recognises the fact that He is adding to the range of the ancient law of respect for human life, and for purity, veracity and kindness. But He assigns no authority for these additions, beyond His own. Persecution by all men is a blessed thing to endure, if it be for His sake and the gospel's. Now this is unique. Moses or Isaiah never dreamed that devotion to himself took rank with devotion to his message. Nor did St. Paul. But Christ opens His ministry with the same pretensions as at the close, when others may not be called Rabbi, nor Master, because these titles belong to Him.

And the lapse of ages renders this "authority" of Christ more wonderful than at first. The world bows down before something other than His clearness of logic or subtlety of inference. He still announces where others argue, He reveals, imposes on us His supremacy, bids us take His yoke and learn. And we still discover in His teaching a freshness and profundity, a universal reach of application and yet an unearthliness of aspect, which suit so unparalleled a claim. Others have constructed cisterns in which to store truth, or aqueducts to convey it from higher levels. Christ is Himself a fountain; and not only so, but the water which He gives, when received aright, becomes in the faithful heart a well of water springing up in new, inexhaustible developments.

MIRACLES.

"And straightway there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit."—MARK i. 23 (R.V.).

WE have just read that Christ's teaching astonished the hearers. He was about to astonish them yet more, for we have now reached the first miracle which St. Mark records. With what sentiments should such a narrative be approached? The evangelist connects it emphatically with Christ's assertion of authority. Immediately upon the impression which His manner of teaching produced, straightway, there was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And upon its expulsion, what most impressed the people was, that as He taught with authority, so "with authority He commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."

Let us try whether this may not be a providential clue, to guide us amid the embarrassments which beset, in our day, the whole subject of miracles.

A miracle, we are told, is an interference with the laws of nature; and it is impossible, because they are fixed and their operation is uniform. But these bold words need not disconcert any one who has learned to ask, In what sense are the operations of nature uniform? Is the operation of the laws which govern the wind uniform, whether my helm is to port or starboard? Can I not modify the operation of sanitary laws by deodorization, by drainage, by a thousand resources of civilization? The truth is, that while natural laws remain fixed, human intelligence profoundly modifies their operation. How then will the objector prove that no higher Being can as naturally

do the same? He answers, Because the sum total of the forces of nature is a fixed quantity: nothing can be added to that sum, nothing taken from it: the energy of all our machinery existed ages ago in the heat of tropical suns, then in vegetation, and ever since, though latent, in our coal beds; and the claim to add anything to that total is subversive of modern science. But again we ask, If the physician adds nothing to the sum of forces when he banishes one disease by inoculation, and another by draining a marsh, why must Jesus have added to the sum of forces in order to expel a demon or to cool a fever? It will not suffice to answer, because His methods are contrary to experience. Beyond experience they are. But so were the marvels of electricity to our parents and of steam to theirs. The chemistry which analyses the stars is not incredible, although thirty years ago its methods were "contrary" to the universal experience of humanity. Man is now doing what he never did before, because he is a more skilful and better informed agent than he ever was. Perhaps at this moment, in the laboratory of some unknown student, some new force is preparing to amaze the world. But the sum of the forces of nature will remain unchanged. Why is it assumed that a miracle must change them? Simply because men have already denied God, or at least denied that He is present within His world, as truly as the chemist is within it. If we think of Him as interrupting its processes from without, laying upon the vast machine so powerful a grasp as to arrest its working, then indeed the sum of forces is disturbed, and the complaints of science are justified. This may, or it may not, have been the case in creative epochs, of which science knows no more than of the beginning

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of life and of consciousness. But it has nothing to say against the doctrine of the miracles of Jesus. For this doctrine assumes that God is ever present in His universe; that by Him all things consist; that He is not far from any one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being, although men may be as unconscious of Him as of gravitation and electricity. When these became known to man, the stability of law was unaffected. And it is a wild assumption that if a supreme and vital force exist, a living God, He cannot make His energies visible without affecting the stability of law.

Now Christ Himself appeals expressly and repeatedly to this immanent presence of God as the explanation of His "works."

"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." "The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth." "I, by the finger of God, cast out devils."

Thus a miracle, even in the Old Testament, is not an interruption of law by God, but a manifestation of God who is within nature always; to common events it is as the lightning to the cloud, a revelation of the electricity which was already there. God was made known, when invoked by His agents, in signs from heaven, in fire and tempest, in drought and pestilence, a God who judgeth. These are the miracles of God interposing for His people against their foes. But the miracles of Christ are those of God carrying forward to the uttermost His presence in the world, God manifest in the flesh. They are the works of Him in Whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

And this explains what would otherwise be so perplexing, the essentially different nature of His miracles from those of the Old Testament. Infidelity pretends

that those are the models on which myth or legend formed the miracles of Jesus, but the plain answer is that they are built on no model of the kind. The difference is so great as to be startling.

Tremendous convulsions and visitations of wrath are now unknown, because God is now reconciling the world unto Himself, and exhibiting in miracles the presence of Him Who is not far from every one of us, His presence in love to redeem the common life of man, and to bless, by sharing it. Therefore His gifts are homely, they deal with average life and its necessities, bread and wine and fish are more to the purpose than that man should eat angels' food, the rescue of storm-tossed fishermen than the engulfment of pursuing armies, the healing of prevalent disease than the plaguing of Egypt or the destruction of Sennacherib.

Such a Presence thus manifested is the consistent doctrine of the Church. It is a theory which men may reject at their own peril if they please. But they must not pretend to refute it by any appeal to either the uniformity of law or the stability of force.

Men tell us that the divinity of Jesus was an afterthought; what shall we say then to this fact, that men observed from the very first a difference between the manner of His miracles and all that was recorded in their Scriptures, or that they could have deemed fit? It is exactly the same peculiarity, carried to the highest pitch, as they already felt in His discourses. They are wrought without any reference whatever to a superior will. Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do? Elijah said, Hear me O Lord, hear me. But Jesus said, I will . . . I charge thee come out . . . I am able to do this. And so marked is the change, that even His followers cast out devils in His name, and

say not, Where is the Lord God of Israel? but, In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. His power is inherent, it is self-possessed, and His acts in the synoptics are only explained by His words in St. John, "What things soever the Father doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner." No wonder that St. Mark adds to His very first record of a miracle, that the people were amazed, and asked, What is this? a new teaching! with authority He commandeth even the unclean spirits and they do obey Him! It was divinity which, without recognising, they felt, implicit in His bearing. No wonder also that His enemies strove hard to make Him say, Who gave Thee this authority? Nor could they succeed in drawing from Him any sign from heaven. The centre and source of the supernatural, for human apprehension, has shifted itself, and the vision of Jesus is the vision of the Father also.

THE DEMONIAC.

"And straightway there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, What have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee Who Thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And the unclean spirit, tearing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? a new teaching! with authority He commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him. And the report of Him went out straightway everywhere into all the region of Galilee round about."—MARK i. 23–28 (R.V).

We have seen that belief in the stability of natural law does not forbid us to believe in miracles.

Special objections are urged, however, against the belief in demoniacal possession. The very existence of

demons is declared to be inconsistent with the omnipotence of God, or else with His goodness.

And it may be granted that abstract reasoning in an ideal world, thought moving in a vacuum, would scarcely evolve a state of things so far removed from the ideal. This, however, is an argument against the existence, not of demons, but of evil in any shape. It is the familiar insoluble problem of all religions, How can evil exist in the universe of God? And it is balanced by the insoluble problem of all irreligious systems: In a universe without God, how can either good or evil exist, as distinguished from the advantageous and the unprofitable? Whence comes the unquestionable difference between a lie and a bad bargain?

But the argument against evil spirits professes to be something more than a disguised reproduction of this abstract problem. What more is it? What is gained by denying the fiends, as long as we cannot deny the fiends incarnate—the men who take pleasure in unrighteousness, in the seduction and ruin of their fellows, in the infliction of torture and outrage, in the ravage and desolation of nations? Such freedom has been granted to the human will, for even these ghastly issues have not been judged so deadly as coercion and moral fatalism. What presumption can possibly remain against the existence of other beings than men, who have fallen yet farther? If, indeed, it be certainly so much farther. For we know that men have lived, not outcasts from society, but boastful sons of Abraham, who willed to perform the lusts (τὰς ἐπιθυμίας) of their father the devil. Now since we are not told that the wickedness of demons is infinite,*

* The opposite is asserted by the fact that one demon may ally himself with seven others worse.

but only that it is abysmal, and since we know that abysses of wickedness do actually exist, what sort of vindication of Deity is this which will believe that such gulfs are yawning only in the bosom of man?

It alarms and shocks us to think that evil spirits have power over the human mind, and still more that such power should extend, as in cases of possession, even to the body. Evil men, however, manifestly wield such power. "They got rid of the wicked one," said Goethe, "but they could not get rid of the wicked ones." Social and intellectual charm, high rank, the mysterious attraction of a strong individuality, all are employed at times to mislead and debase the shuddering, reluctant, mesmerised wills of weaker men and women. And then the mind acts upon the body, as perhaps it always does. Drunkenness and debauchery shake the nerves. Paralysis and lunacy tread hard on the footsteps of excess. Experience knows no reason for denying that when wickedness conquers the soul it will also deal hardly with the body.

But we must not stop here. For the Gospels do not countenance the popular notion that special wickedness was the cause of the fearful wretchedness of the possessed. Young children suffered. Jesus often cautioned a sufferer to sin no more lest worse results should follow than those He had removed; but He is never known to have addressed this warning to demoniacs. They suffered from the tyranny of Satan, rather than from his seduction; and the analogies which make credible so frightful an outrage upon human nature, are the wrongs done by despots and mobs, by invading armies and persecuting religionists. Yet people who cannot believe that a demon could throw a child upon the fire, are not incredulous of Attila, Napoleon, and the Inquisition.

Thus it appears that such a narrative need startle no believer in God, and in moral good and evil, who considers the unquestionable facts of life. And how often will the observant Christian be startled at the wild insurrection and surging up of evil thought and dark suggestions, which he cannot believe to be his own, which will not be gainsaid nor repulsed. How easily do such experiences fall in with the plain words of Scripture, by which the veil is drawn aside, and the mystery of the spiritual world laid bare. Then we learn that man is not only fallen but assaulted, not only feeble but enslaved, not only a wandering sheep but led captive by the devil at his will.

We turn to the narrative before us. They are still wondering at our Lord's authoritative manner, when "straightway," for opportunities were countless until unbelief arose, a man with an unclean spirit attracts attention. We can only conjecture the special meaning of this description. A recent commentator assumes that "like the rest, he had his dwelling among the tombs: an overpowering influence had driven him away from the haunts of men." (Canon Luckock, *in loco*). To others this feature in the wretchedness of the Gadarene may perhaps seem rather to be exceptional, the last touch in the appalling picture of his misery. It may be that nothing more outrageous than morbid gloom or sullen mutterings had hitherto made it necessary to exclude this sufferer from the synagogue. Or the language may suggest that he rushed abruptly in, driven by the frantic hostility of the fiend, or impelled by some mysterious and lingering hope, as the demoniac of Gadara ran to Christ.

What we know is that the sacred Presence provoked a crisis. There is an unbelief which never can be

silent, never wearies railing at the faith, and there is a corruption which resents goodness and hates it as a personal wrong. So the demons who possessed men were never able to confront Jesus calmly. They resent His interference; they cry out; they disclaim having anything to do with Him; they seem indignant that He should come to destroy them who have destroyed so many. There is something weird and unearthly in the complaint. But men also are wont to forget their wrong doing when they come to suffer, and it is recorded that even Nero had abundance of compassion for himself. Weird also and terrible is it, that this unclean spirit should choose for his confession that pure and exquisite epithet, the Holy One of God. The phrase only recurs in the words of St. Peter, "We have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God" (John vi. 69, R. V.). Was it not a mournful association of ideas which then led Jesus to reply, "Have I not chosen you the Twelve, and one of you is a devil?*" But although the phrase is beautiful, and possibly "wild with all regret," there is no relenting, no better desire than to be "let alone." And so Jesus, so gentle with sinful men, yet sometime to be their judge also, is stern and cold. "Hold thy peace—be muzzled," He answers, as to a wild beast, "and come out of him." Whereupon the evil spirit exhibits at once his ferocity and his defeat. Tearing and screaming, he came out, but we read in St. Luke that he did the man no harm.

And the spectators drew the proper inference. A new power implied a new revelation. Something far-

* The connection would be almost certain if the word "devil" were alike in both. But in all these narratives it is "demon," there being in Scripture but one devil.

reaching and profound might be expected from Him who commanded even the unclean spirits with authority, and was obeyed.

It is the custom of unbelievers to speak as if the air of Palestine were then surcharged with belief in the supernatural. Miracles were everywhere. Thus they would explain away the significance of the popular belief that our Lord wrought signs and wonders. But in so doing they set themselves a worse problem than they evade. If miracles were so very common, it would be as easy to believe that Jesus wrought them as that He worked at His father's bench. But also it would be as inconclusive. And how then are we to explain the astonishment which all the evangelists so constantly record? On any conceivable theory, these writers shared the beliefs of that age. And so did the readers who accepted their assurance that all were amazed, and that His report "went out straightway everywhere into all the region of Galilee." These are emphatic words, and both the author and his readers must have considered a miracle to be more surprising than modern critics believe they did.

Yet we do not read that any one was converted by this miracle. All were amazed, but wonder is not self-surrender. They were content to let their excitement die out, as every violent emotion must, without any change of life, any permanent devotion to the new Teacher and His doctrine.

A GROUP OF MIRACLES.

"And straightway, when they were come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and straightway they tell Him of her: and He came and took her by the hand, and raised her up; and the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were sick, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and He suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him."—MARK i. 29–34 (R.V.).

ST. MATTHEW tells us that on leaving the synagogue they entered into Peter's house. St. Mark, with his peculiar sources of information, is aware that Andrew shared the house with his brother.

Especial interest attaches to the mention of the mother-in-law of Peter, as proving that Jesus chose a married man to be an apostle, the very apostle from whom the celibate ministry of Rome professes to have received the keys. The evidence does not stand alone. When St. Paul's apostolic authority was impugned, he insisted that he had the same right to bring with him in his travels a believing wife, which Peter exercised. And Clement of Alexandria tells us that Peter's wife acted as his coadjutor, ministering to women in their own homes, by which means the gospel of Christ penetrated without scandal the privacy of women's apartments. Thus the notion of a Zenana mission is by no means modern.

The mother of such a wife is afflicted by fever of a kind which still haunts that district. "And they tell Him of her." Doubtless there was solicitude and hope in their voices, even if desire did not take the shape of formal prayer. We are just emerging from that early

period when belief in His power to heal might still be united with some doubt whether free application might be made to Him. His disciples might still be as unwise as those modern theologians who are so busy studying the miracles as a sign that they forget to think of them as works of love. Any such hesitation was now to be dispelled for ever.

It is possible that such is the meaning of the expression, and if so, it has a useful lesson. Sometimes there are temporal gifts which we scarce know whether we should pray for, so complex are our feelings, so entangled our interests with those of others, so obscure and dubious the springs which move our desire. Is it presumptuous to ask? Yet can it be right to keep anything back, in our communion with our Father?

Now there is a curious similarity between the expression "they tell Jesus of her" and that phrase which is only applied to prayer when St. Paul bids us pray for all that is in our hearts. "In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." So shall the great benediction be fulfilled: "The peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts" (Phil. iv. 6, 7). All that is unholy shall be purified, all that is unwise subdued, all that is expedient granted.

If this be indeed the force of St. Mark's phrase, Jesus felt their modest reticence to be a strong appeal, for St. Luke says "they besought Him," while St. Matthew merely writes that He saw her lying. The "Interpreter of St. Peter" is most likely to have caught the exact shade of anxiety and appeal by which her friends drew His attention, and which was indeed a prayer.

The gentle courtesy of our Lord's healings cannot be

too much studied by those who would know His mind and love Him. Never does He fling a careless blessing as coarse benefactors fling their alms; we shall hereafter see how far He was from leaving fallen bread to be snatched as by a dog, even by one who would have welcomed a boon thus contemptuously given to her; and in the hour of His arrest, when He would heal the ear of a persecutor, His courtesy appeals to those who had laid hold on Him, "Suffer ye thus far." Thus He went to this woman and took her by the hand and raised her up, laying a cool touch upon her fevered palm, bestowing His strength upon her weakness, healing her as He would fain heal humanity. For at His touch the disease was banished; with His impulse her strength returned.

We do not read that she felt bound thereupon to become an obtrusive public witness to His powers: that was not her function; but in her quiet home she failed not to minister unto Him who had restored her powers. Would that all whose physical powers Jesus renews from sickness, might devote their energies to Him. Would that all for whom He has calmed the fever of earthly passion, might arise and be energetic in His cause.

Think of the wonder, the gladness and gratitude of their humble feast. But if we felt aright the sickness of our souls, and the grace which heals them, equal gratitude would fill our lives as He sups with us and we with Him.

Tidings of the two miracles have quickly gone abroad, and as the sun sets, and the restraint of the sabbath is removed, all the city gathers all the sick around His door.

Now here is a curious example of the peril of press-

ing too eagerly our inferences from the expressions of an evangelist. St. Mark tells us that they brought "all their sick and them that were possessed with devils. And He healed" (not all, but) "many that were sick, and cast out many devils." How easily we might distinguish between the "all" who came, and the "many" who were healed. Want of faith would explain the difference, and spiritual analogies would be found for those who remained unhealed at the feet of the good Physician. These lessons might be very edifying, but they would be out of place, for St. Matthew tells us that He healed them all.

But who can fail to contrast this universal movement, the urgent quest of bodily health, and the willingness of friends and neighbours to convey their sick to Jesus, with our indifference to the health of the soul, and our neglect to lead others to the Saviour. Disease being the cold shadow of sin, its removal was a kind of sacrament, an outward and visible sign that the Healer of souls was nigh. But the chillness of the shadow afflicts us more than the pollution of the substance, and few professing Christians lament a hot temper as sincerely as a fever.

As Jesus drove out the demons, He suffered them not to speak because they knew Him. We cannot believe that His rejection of their impure testimony was prudential only, whatever possibility there may have been of that charge of complicity which was afterwards actually brought. Any help which might have come to Him from the lips of hell was shocking and revolting to our Lord. And this is a lesson for all religious and political partisans who stop short of doing evil themselves, but reject no advantage which the evil deeds of others may bestow. Not so cold and negative is the

morality of Jesus. He regards as contamination whatever help fraud, suppressions of truth, injustice, by whomsoever wrought, can yield. He rejects them by an instinct of abhorrence, and not only because shame and dishonour have always befallen the purest cause which stooped to unholy alliances.

Jesus that day showed Himself powerful alike in the congregation, in the home, and in the streets, and over evil spirits and physical disease alike.

JESUS IN SOLITUDE.

"And in the morning, a great while before day, He rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after Him; and they found Him, and say unto Him, All are seeking Thee. And He saith unto them, Let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth. And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and preaching casting out devils."—MARK i. 35–39 (R.V.).

ST. MARK is pre-eminently the historian of Christ's activities. From him chiefly we learn to add to our thought of perfect love and gentleness that of One whom the zeal of God's house ate up. But this evangelist does not omit to tell us by what secret fountains this river of life was fed; how the active labours of Jesus were inspired in secret prayers. Too often we allow to one side of religion a development which is not excessive, but disproportinate, and we are punished when contemplation becomes nerveless, or energy burns itself away.

After feeding the five thousand, St. Mark tells us that Jesus, while the storm gathered over His disciples on the lake, went up into a mountain to pray. And St. Luke tells of a whole night of prayer before choosing

His disciples, and how it was to pray that He climbed the mountain of transfiguration.

And we read of Him going into a desert place with His disciples, and to Olivet, and oft-times resorting to the garden where Judas found Him, where, in the dead of night, the traitor naturally sought Him.

Prayer was the spring of all His energies, and His own saying indicated the habit of His mortal life as truly as the law of His mysterious generation: "I live by the Father."

His prayers impress nothing on us more powerfully than the reality of His manhood. He, Who possesses all things, bends His knees to crave, and His prayers are definite, no empty form, no homage without sense of need, no firing of blank cartridge without an aim. He asks that His disciples may be with Him where He is, that Simon's strength may fail not, that He may Himself be saved from a dreadful hour. "Such touches" said Godet "do not look like an artificial apotheosis of Jesus, and they constitute a striking difference between the gospel portrait and the legendary caricature."

The entire evening had been passed in healing the diseases of the whole town; not the light and careless bestowal of a boon which cost nothing, but wrought with so much sympathy, such draining of His own vital forces, that St. Matthew found in it a fulfilment of the prophecy that He should Himself bear our sicknesses. And thus exhausted, the frame might have been forgiven for demanding some indulgence, some prolongation of repose.

But the course of our Lord's ministry was now opening up before Him, and the hindrances becoming visible. How much was to be hoped from the great impression already made; how much to be feared from

the weakness of His followers, the incipient envy of priest and Pharisee, and the volatile excitability of the crowd. At such a time, to relieve His burdened heart with Divine communion was more to Jesus than repose, as, at another time, to serve Him was meat to eat. And therefore, in the still fresh morning, long before the dawn, while every earthly sight was dim but the abysses of heaven were vivid, declaring without voice, amid the silence of earth's discord, the glory and the handiwork of His Father, Jesus went into a solitary place and prayed.

What is it that makes solitude and darkness dreadful to some, and oppressive to very many?

Partly the sense of physical danger, born of helplessness and uncertainty. This He never felt, who knew that He must walk to-day and to-morrow, and on the third day be perfected. And partly it is the weight of unwelcome reflection, the searching and rebukes of memory, fears that come of guilt, and inward distractions of a nature estranged from the true nature of the universe. Jesus was agitated by no inward discords, upbraided by no remorse. And He had probably no reveries; He is never recorded to soliloquise; solitude to Him was but another name for communion with God His Father; He was never alone, for God was with Him.

This retirement enabled Him to remain undisturbed until His disciples found Him, long after the crowds had besieged their dwelling. They had not yet learned how all true external life must rest upon the hidden life of devotion, and there is an accent of regret in the words, "All are seeking Thee," as if Jesus could neglect in self-culture any true opportunity for service.

The answer, noteworthy in itself, demands especial

attention in these times of missions, demonstrations, Salvation Armies, and other wise and unwise attempts to gather excited crowds around the cross.

Mere sensation actually repelled Jesus. Again and again He charged men not to make Him known, in places where He would stay; while in Gadara, which He had to leave, His command to the demoniac was the reverse. Deep and real convictions are not of kin with sight-seeing and the pursuit of wonders. Capernaum has now heard His message, has received its full share of physical blessing, is exalted unto heaven. Those who were looking for redemption knew the gospel, and Jesus must preach it in other towns also. Therefore, and not to be the centre of admiring multitudes, came He forth from His quiet home.

Such is the sane and tranquil action of Jesus, in face of the excitement caused by His many miracles. Now the miracles themselves, and all that depends on them, are declared to be the creation of the wildest fanaticism, either during His lifetime or developing His legend afterwards. And if so, we have here, in the action of human mind, the marvel of modern physicists, ice from a red-hot retort, absolute moderation from a dream of frenzy. And this paradox is created in the act of "explaining" the miracles. The explanation, even were it sustained by any evidence, would be as difficult as any miracle to believe.

THE LEPER.

"And there cometh to Him a leper, beseeching Him, and kneeling down to Him, and saying unto Him, If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And being moved with compassion, He stretched forth His hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou made clean. And straightway the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean. And He strictly charged him, and straightway sent him out, and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing the things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to spread abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into a city, but was without in desert places: and they came to Him from every quarter."—MARK i. 40–45 (R. V.).

THE disease of leprosy was peculiarly fearful to a Jew. In its stealthy beginning, its irresistible advance, the utter ruin which it wrought from the blood outward until the flesh was corroded and fell away, it was a fit type of sin, at first so trivial in its indications, but gradually usurping all the nature and corrupting it. And the terrible fact, that the children of its victims were also doomed, reminded the Israelite of the transmission of the taint of Adam.

The story of Naaman and that of Gehazi make it almost certain that the leprosy of Scripture was not contagious, for they were intimate with kings. But, apparently to complete the type, the law gave to it the artificial contagion of ceremonial uncleanness, and banished the unhappy sufferer from the dwellings of men. Thus he came to be regarded as under an especial ban, and the prophecy which announced that the illustrious Man of Sorrows would be esteemed "stricken of God," was taken to mean that He should be a leper. This banishment of the leper was indeed a remark-

able exception to the humanity of the ancient law, but when his distress began to be extreme, and "the plague was turned into white," he was released from his uncleanness (Lev. xiii. 17). And this may teach us that sin is to be dreaded most while it is yet insidious; when developed it gives a sufficient warning against itself. And now such a sufferer appeals to Jesus. The incident is one of the most pathetic in the Gospel; and its graphic details, and the shining character which it reveals, make it very perplexing to moderate and thoughtful sceptics.

Those who believe that the charm of His presence was "worth all the resources of medicine," agree that Christ may have cured even leprosy, and insist that this story, as told by St. Mark, "must be genuine." Others suppose that the leper was already cured, and Jesus only urged him to fulfil the requirements of the law. And why not deny the story boldly? Why linger so longingly over the details, when credence is refused to what is plainly the mainspring of the whole, the miraculous power of Jesus? The answer is plain. Honest minds feel the touch of a great nature; the misery of the suppliant and the compassion of his Restorer are so vivid as to prove themselves; no dreamer of a myth, no process of legend-building, ever wrought after this fashion. But then, the misery and compassion being granted, the whole story is practically conceded. It only remains to ask, whether the "presence of the Saintly Man" could work a chemical change in tainted blood. For it must be insisted that the man was "full of leprosy," and not, as one suggests, already far advanced towards cure. The contrast between his running and kneeling at the very feet of Jesus, and the conduct of the ten lepers, not yet

released from their exclusion, who stood afar off while they cried out (Luke xvii. 12), is sufficient evidence of this, even if the express statement of St. Luke were not decisive.

Repulsive, and until now despairing, only tolerated among men through the completeness of his plague, this man pushes through the crowd which shrinks from him, kneels in an agony of supplication, and says "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." If Thou wilt! The cruelty of man has taught him to doubt the heart, even though satisfied of the power of Jesus. In a few years, men came to assume the love, and exult in the reflection that He was "able to keep what 'was' committed to Him," "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." It did not occur to St. Paul that any mention of His will was needed.

Nor did Jesus Himself ask a later suppliant, "Believest thou that I am willing," but "Believest thou that I am able to do this?"

But the charm of this delightful incident is the manner in which our Lord grants the impassioned prayer. We might have expected a shudder, a natural recoil from the loathsome spectacle, and then a wonder-working word. But misery which He could relieve did not repel Jesus; it attracted Him. His impulse was to approach. He not only answered "I will,"—and deep is the will to remove all anguish in the wonderful heart of Jesus,—but He stretched forth an unshrinking hand, and touched that death in life. It is a parable of all His course, this laying of a clean hand on the sin of the world to cleanse it. At His touch, how was the morbid frame thrilled with delightful pulses of suddenly renovated health. And how was the despairing, joyless heart, incredulous of any

real will to help him, soothed and healed by the pure delight of being loved.

This is the true lesson of the narrative. St. Mark treats the miraculous cure much more lightly than the tender compassion and the swift movement to relieve suffering. And He is right. The warm and generous nature revealed by this fine narrative is what, as we have seen, most impresses the doubter, and ought most to comfort the Church. For He is the same yesterday and to-day. And perhaps, if the divinity of love impressed men as much as that of power, there would be less denial of the true Godhead of our Lord.

The touch of a leper made a Jew unclean. And there is a surprising theory, that when Jesus could no more openly enter into a city, it was because the leper had disobediently published what implied His ceremonial defilement. As if our Lord were one to violate the law by stealth.

But is it very remarkable that Christ, Who was born under the law, never betrayed any anxiety about cleanness. The law of impurity was in fact an expression of human frailty. Sin spreads corruption far more easily than virtue diffuses purity. The touch of goodness fails to reproduce goodness. And the prophet Haggai has laid stress upon this contrast, that bread or pottage or wine or oil or any meat will not become holy at the touch of one who bears holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, but if one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, it shall be unclean (ii. 12, 13). Our hearts know full well how true to nature is the ordinance.

But Christ brought among us a virtue more contagious than our vices are, being not only a living soul, but a life-imparting Spirit. And thus He lays His

hand upon this leper, upon the bier at Nain, upon the corpse of the daughter of Jairus, and as fire is kindled at the touch of fire, so instead of pollution to Him, the pureness of healthful life is imparted to the defiling and defiled.

And His followers also are to possess a religion that is vitalizing, to be the light of the world, and the salt of the earth.

If we are thus to further His cause, we must not only be zealous but obedient. Jesus strictly charged the leper not to fan the flame of an excitement which already impeded His work. But there was an invaluable service which he might render: the formal registration of his cure, the securing its official recognition by the priests, and their consent to offer the commanded sacrifices. In many a subsequent controversy, that "testimony unto them" might have been embarrassing indeed. But the leper lost his opportunity, and put them upon their guard. And as through his impulsive clamour Jesus could no more openly enter into a city, but even in desert places was beset by excited crowds, so is He deprived to-day of many a tranquil ministration and lowly service, by the zeal which despises order and quiet methods, by the undisciplined and ill-judged demonstrations of men and women whom He has blessed.

CHAPTER II.

THE SICK OF THE PALSY.

"And when He entered again into Capernaum after some days, it was noised that He was in the house."—MARK ii. 1 (R.V.).

JESUS returns to Capernaum, and an eager crowd blocks even the approaches to the house where He is known to be. St. Mark, as we should expect, relates the course of events, the multitudes, the ingenious device by which a miracle is obtained, the claim which Jesus advances to yet greater authority than heretofore, and the impression produced. But St. Luke explains that there were "sitting by," having obtained the foremost places which they loved, Pharisees and doctors of the law from every village of Galilee and Judæa, and from Jerusalem itself. And this concourse, evidently preconcerted and unfriendly, explains the first murmurs of opposition recorded by St. Mark. It was the jealousy of rival teachers which so readily pronounced Him a blasphemer.

The crowds besieged the very passages, there was no room, no, not around the door, and even if one might struggle forward, four men bearing a litter might well despair. But with palsied paralysis at stake, they would not be repulsed. They gained the roof by an outer staircase, such as the fugitives from Jerusalem should hereafter use, not going through the house.

Then they uncovered and broke up the roof, by which strong phrases St. Mark means that they first lifted the tiles which lay in a bed of mortar or mud, broke through this, and then tore up the poles and light rafters by which all this covering was supported. Then they lowered the sick man upon his pallet, in front of the Master as He taught.

It was an unceremonious act. However carefully performed, the audience below must have been not only disturbed but inconvenienced, and doubtless among the precise and unmerciful personages in the chief seats there was many an angry glance, many a murmur, many a conjecture of rebukes presently to be inflicted on the intruders.

But Jesus never in any circumstances rebuked for intrusion any suppliant. And now He discerned the central spiritual impulse of these men, which was not obtrusiveness nor disrespect. They believed that neither din while He preached, nor rubbish falling among His audience, nor the strange interruption of a patient and a litter intruded upon His discourse, could weigh as much with Jesus as the appeal on a sick man's face. And this was faith. These peasants may have been far enough from intellectual discernment of Christ's Personality and the scheme of salvation. They had however a strong and practical conviction that He would make whole their palsied friend.

Now the preaching of faith is suspected of endangering good works. But was this persuasion likely to make these men torpid? Is it not plain that all spiritual apathy comes not from over-trust but from unbelief, either doubting that sin is present death, or else that holiness is life, and that Jesus has a gift to bestow, not in heaven, but promptly, which is better to

gain than all the world? Therefore salvation is linked with faith, which earns nothing but elicits all, like the touch that evokes electricity, but which no man supposes to have made it.

Because they knew the curse of palsy, and believed in a present remedy, these men broke up the roof to come where Jesus was. They won their blessing, but not the less it was His free gift.

Jesus saw and rewarded the faith of all the group. The principle of mutual support and co-operation is the basis alike of the family, the nation, and the Church. Thus the great Apostle desired obscure and long-forgotten men and women to help together with him in their prayers. And He who visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, shows mercy unto many more, unto thousands, in them that love Him. What a rebuke is all this to men who think it enough that they should do no harm, and live inoffensive lives. Jesus now bestowed such a blessing as awoke strange misgivings among the bystanders. He divined the true burden of that afflicted heart, the dreary memories and worse fears which haunted that sick bed,—and how many are even now preparing such remorse and gloom for a bed of pain hereafter!—and perhaps He discerned the consciousness of some guilty origin of the disease. Certainly He saw there one whose thoughts went beyond his malady, a yearning soul, with hope glowing like red sparks amid the ashes of his self-reproach, that a teacher so gracious as men reported Jesus, might bring with Him a gospel indeed. We know that he felt thus, for Jesus made him of good cheer by pardon rather than by healing, and spoke of the cure itself as wrought less for his sake than as evidence.

Surely that was a great moment when the wistful gaze of eyes which disease had dimmed, met the eyes which were as a flame of fire, and knew that all its sullied past was at once comprehended and forgiven.

Jesus said to him, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." The term of endearment was new to his lips, and very emphatic; the same which Mary used when she found Him in the temple, the same as when He argued that even evil men give good gifts unto their children. Such a relation towards Himself He recognised in this afflicted penitent. On the other hand, the dry argumentative temper of the critics is well expressed by the short crackling unemotional utterances of their orthodoxy: "Why doth this man thus speak? He blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins but one, God." There is no zeal in it, no passion for God's honour, no spiritual insight, it is as heartless as a syllogism. And in what follows a fine contrast is implied between their perplexed orthodoxy, and Christ's profound discernment. For as He had just read the sick man's heart, so He "perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves." And He asks them the searching question, "Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk?" Now which is really easier? It is not enough to lay all the emphasis upon "to say," as if with Jesus the ease of an utterance depended on the difficulty of testing it. There is indeed a certain irony in the question. They doubtless imagined that Jesus was evading their scrutiny by only bestowing what they could not test. To them forgiveness seemed more easily offered than a cure. To the Christian, it is less to heal disease, which is a mere consequence, than sin, which is the source of all our woes. To the power of Jesus they were alike, and connected with each other

as the symptom and the true disease. In truth, all the compassion which blesses our daily life is a pledge of grace; and He Who healeth all our diseases forgiveth also all our iniquities. But since healing was the severer test in their reckoning, Jesus does not evade it. He restores the palsied man to health, that they might know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins. So then, pardon does not lie concealed and doubtful in the councils of an unknown world. It is pronounced on earth. The Son of man, wearing our nature and touched with our infirmities, bestows it still, in the Scriptures, in the Sacraments, in the ministrations of His servants. Wherever He discerns faith, He responds with assurance of the absolution and remission of sins.

He claims to do this, as men had so lately observed that He both taught and worked miracles, "with authority." We then saw that this word expressed the direct and personal mastery with which He wrought, and which the apostles never claimed for themselves.

Therefore this text cannot be quoted in defence of priestly absolutions, as long as these are hypothetical, and depend on the recipient's earnestness, or on any supposition, any uncertainty whatever. Christ did not utter a hypothesis.

Fortunately, too, the argument that men, priestly men, must have authority on earth to forgive sins, because the Son of man has such authority, can be brought to an easy test. There is a passage elsewhere, which asserts His authority, and upon which the claim to share it can be tried. The words are, "The Father gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of man," and they are immediately followed by an announcement of the resurrection to judgment (John v. 27, 29). Is any one prepared to contend that

such authority as that is vested in other sons of men? And if not that, why this?

But if priestly absolutions are not here, there remains the certainty that Jesus brought to earth, to man, the gift of prompt effective pardon, to be realized by faith.

The sick man is ordered to depart at once. Further discourse might perhaps be reserved for others, but he may not linger, having received his own bodily and spiritual medicine. The teaching of Christ is not for curiosity. It is good for the greatly blessed to be alone. And it is sometimes dangerous for obscure people to be thrust into the centre of attention.

Hereupon, another touch of nature discovers itself in the narrative, for it is now easy to pass through the crowd. Men who would not in their selfishness give place for palsied misery, readily make room for the distinguished person who has received a miraculous blessing.

THE SON OF MAN.

"The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."—MARK ii. 10.

WHEN asserting His power to forgive sins, Jesus, for the first time in our Gospel, called Himself the Son of man.

It is a remarkable phrase. The profound reverence which He from the first inspired, restrained all other lips from using it, save only when the first martyr felt such a rush of sympathy from above poured into his soul, that the thought of Christ's humanity was more moving than that of His deity. So too it is then alone that He is said to be not enthroned in heaven, but standing, "the Son of man, standing on the right hand of God" (Acts vii. 56).*

* The exceptions in the Revelation are only apparent. St. John does not call Jesus the Son of man (i. 13), nor see Him, but only the type of Him, standing (v. 6).

What then does this title imply? Beyond doubt it is derived from Daniel's vision: "Behold there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a Son of man, and He came even to the Ancient of Days" (vii. 13). And it was by the bold and unequivocal appropriation of this verse that Jesus brought upon Himself the judgment of the council (Matt. xxvi. 64; Mark xiv. 62).

Now the first impression which the phrase in Daniel produces is that of strong and designed contrast between the Son of man and the Eternal God. We wonder at seeing man "brought nigh" to Deity. Nor may we suppose that to be "like unto a Son of man," implies only an appearance of manhood. In Daniel the Messiah can be cut off. When Jesus uses the epithet, and even when He quotes the prophecy, He not only resembles a Son of man, He is truly such; He is most frequently "*the* Son of man," the pre-eminent, perhaps the only one.*

But while the expression intimates a share in the lowliness of human nature, it does not imply a lowly rank among men.

Our Lord often suggested by its use the difference between His circumstances and His dignity. "The Son of man hath not where to lay His head:" "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss," in each of these we feel that the title asserts a claim to different treatment. And in the great verse, God "hath given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of man," we discern that although human hands are chosen as fittest to do judgment upon humanity, yet His extraordinary dignity is also taken into account.

* And this proves beyond question that He did not merely follow Ezekiel in applying to himself the epithet as if it meant a son among many sons of men, but took the description in Daniel for His own. Ezekiel himself indeed never employs the phrase: he only records it.

The title belongs to our Lord's humiliation, but is far from an additional abasement ; it asserts His supremacy over those whom He is not ashamed to call brethren.

We all are sons of men ; and Jesus used the phrase when He promised that all manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven to us. But there is a higher sense in which, among thousands of the ignoble, we single out one "real man ;" and in this sense, as fulfilling the idea, Jesus was the Second Man. What a difference exists between the loftiest sons of vulgar men, and the Son of our complete humanity, of the race, "of Man." The pre-eminence even of our best and greatest is fragmentary and incomplete. In their veins runs but a portion of the rich life-blood of the race : but a share of its energy throbs in the greatest bosom. We seldom find the typical thinker in the typical man of action. Originality of purpose and of means are not commonly united. To know all that holiness embraces, we must combine the energies of one saint with the gentler graces of a second and the spiritual insight of a third. There is no man of genius who fails to make himself the child of his nation and his age, so that Shakespeare would be impossible in France, Hugo in Germany, Goethe in England. Two great nations slay their kings and surrender their liberties to military dictators, but Napoleon would have been unendurable to us, and Cromwell ridiculous across the channel.

Large allowances are to be made for the Greek in Plato, the Roman in Epictetus, before we can learn of them. Each and all are the sons of their tribe and century, not of all mankind and all time. But who will point out the Jewish warp in any word or institution of Jesus? In the new man which is after His image there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and

uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman, but Christ is all and in all, something of Him represented by each, all of them concentrated in Him. He alone speaks to all men without any foreign accent, and He alone is recognised and understood as widely as the voices of nature, as the sigh of waves and breezes, and the still endurance of the stars. Reading the Gospels, we become aware that four writers of widely different bias and temperament have all found an equally congenial subject, so that each has given a portrait harmonious with the others, and yet unique. It is because the sum total of humanity is in Christ, that no single writer could have told His story.

But now consider what this implies. It demands an example from which lonely women and heroic leaders of action should alike take fire. It demands that He should furnish meditation for sages in the closet, and should found a kingdom more brilliant than those of conquerors. It demands that He should strike out new paths towards new objects, and be supremely original without deviating from what is truly sane and human, for any selfish or cruel or unwholesome joy. It demands the gentleness of a sheep before her shearers, and such burning wrath as seven times over denounced against the hypocrites of Jerusalem woe and the damnation of hell. It demands the sensibilities which made Gethsemane dreadful, and the strength which made Calvary sublime. It demands that when we approach Him we should learn to feel the awe of other worlds, the nearness of God, the sinfulness of sin, the folly of laying up much goods for many years; that life should be made solemn and profound, but yet that it should not be darkened nor depressed unduly; that nature and man should be made dear to us, little children, and sinners

who are scorned yet who love much, and lepers who stand afar off—yes, and even the lilies of the field, and the fowls of the air; that He should not be unaware of the silent processes of nature which bears fruit of itself, of sunshine and rain, and the fury of storms and torrents, and the leap of the lightning across all the sky. Thus we can bring to Jesus every anxiety and every hope, for He, and only He, was tempted in all points like unto us. Universality of power, of sympathy, and of influence, is the import of this title which Jesus claims. And that demand Jesus only has satisfied, Who is the Master of Sages, the Friend of sinners, the Man of Sorrows, and the King of kings, the one perfect blossom on the tree of our humanity, the ideal of our nature incarnate, the Second Adam in Whom the fulness of the race is visible. The Second Man is the Lord from Heaven. And this strange and solitary grandeur He foretold, when He took to Himself this title, itself equally strange and solitary, the Son of man.

THE CALL AND FEAST OF LEVI.

"And He went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them. And as He passed by, He saw Levi the *son* of Alphæus sitting at the place of toll, and He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him. And it came to pass, that He was sitting at meat in his house, and many publicans and sinners sat down with Jesus and His disciples: for there were many, and they followed Him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that He was eating with the sinners and publicans, said unto His disciples, He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners. And when Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."—MARK ii. 13–17 (R.V.).

JESUS loved the open air. His custom when teaching was to point to the sower, the lily, and the bird. He

is no pale recluse emerging from a library to instruct, in the dim religious light of cloisters, a world unknown except by books. Accordingly we find Him "again by the sea-side." And however the scribes and Pharisees may have continued to murmur, the multitudes resorted to Him, confiding in the evidence of their experience, which never saw it on this fashion.

That argument was perfectly logical; it was an induction, yet it led them to a result curiously the reverse of theirs who reject miracles for being contrary to experience. "Yes," they said, "we appeal to experience, but the conclusion is that good deeds which it cannot parallel must come directly from the Giver of all good."

Such good deeds continue. The creed of Christ has re-formed Europe, it is awakening Asia, it has transformed morality, and imposed new virtues on the conscience. It is the one religion for the masses, the lapsed, and indeed for the sick in body as truly as in soul; for while science discourses with enthusiasm upon progress by the rejection of the less fit, our faith cherishes these in hospitals, asylums, and retreats, and prospers by lavishing care upon the outcast and rejected of the world. Now this transcends experience: we never saw it on this fashion; it is supernatural. Or else let scientific atheism produce its reformed magdalens, and its homes for the hopelessly diseased and imbecile, and all "the weakest" who go, as she tenderly assures us, "to the wall."

Jesus now gave a signal proof of His independence of human judgment, His care for the despised and rejected. For such a one He completed the rupture between Himself and the rulers of the people.

Sitting at the receipt of toll, in the act of levying from his own nation the dues of the conqueror, Levi

the publican received the call to become an Apostle and Evangelist. It was a resolute defiance of the pharisaic judgment. It was a memorable rebuke for those timid slaves of expediency who nurse their influence, refuse to give offence, fear to "mar their usefulness" by "compromising themselves," and so make their whole life one abject compromise, and let all emphatic usefulness go by.

Here is one upon whom the bigot scowls more darkly still than upon Jesus Himself, by whom the Roman yoke is pressed upon Hebrew necks, an apostate in men's judgment from the national faith and hope. And such judgments sadly verify themselves; a despised man easily becomes despicable.

But however Levi came by so strange and hateful an office, Jesus saw in him no slavish earner of vile bread by doing the foreigner's hateful work. He was more willing than they who scorned him to follow the true King of Israel. It is even possible that the national humiliations to which his very office testified led him to other aspirations, longings after a spiritual kingdom beyond reach of the sword or the exactions of Rome For his Gospel is full of the true kingdom of heaven, the spiritual fulfilments of prophecy, and the relations between the Old Testament and the Messiah.

Here then is an opportunity to show the sneering scribe and carping Pharisee how little their cynical criticism weighs with Jesus. He calls the despised agent of the heathen to His side, and is obeyed. And now the name of the publican is engraven upon one of the foundations of the city of God.

Nor did Jesus refuse to carry such condescension to its utmost limit, eating and drinking in Levi's house with many publicans and sinners, who were already

attracted by His teaching, and now rejoiced in His familiarity. Just in proportion as He offended the pharisaic scribes, so did He inspire with new hope the unhappy classes who were taught to consider themselves castaway. His very presence was medicinal, a rebuke to foul words and thoughts, an outward and visible sign of grace. It brought pure air and sunshine into a fever-stricken chamber.

And this was His justification when assailed. He had borne healing to the sick. He had called sinners to repentance. And therefore His example has a double message. It rebukes those who look curiously on the intercourse of religious people with the world, who are plainly of opinion that the leaven should be hid anywhere but in the meal, who can never fairly understand St. Paul's permission to go to an idolater's feast. But it gives no licence to go where we cannot be a healing influence, where the light must be kept in a dark lantern if not under a bushel, where, instead of drawing men upward, we shall only confirm their indolent self-satisfaction.

Christ's reason for seeking out the sick, the lost, is ominous indeed for the self-satisfied. The whole have no need of a physician; He came not to call the righteous. Such persons, whatever else they be, are not Christians until they come to a different mind.

In calling Himself the Physician of sick souls, Jesus made a startling claim, which becomes more emphatic when we observe that He also quoted the words of Hosea, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice" (Matt. ix. 13; Hos. vi. 6). For this expression occurs in that chapter which tells how the Lord Himself hath smitten and will bind us up. And the complaint is just before it that when Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah saw

his wound, then went Ephraim to Assyria and sent to king Jareb, but he is not able to heal you, neither shall he cure you of your wound (Hos. v. 13–vi. 1). As the Lord Himself hath torn, so He must heal.

Now Jesus comes to that part of Israel which the Pharisees despise for being wounded and diseased, and justifies Himself by words which must, from their context, have reminded every Jew of the declaration that God is the physician, and it is vain to seek healing elsewhere. And immediately afterwards, He claims to be the Bridegroom, whom also Hosea spoke of as divine. Yet men profess that only in St. John does He advance such claims that we should ask, Whom makest Thou Thyself? Let them try the experiment, then, of putting such words into the lips of any mortal.

The choice of the apostles, and most of all that of Levi, illustrates the power of the cross to elevate obscure and commonplace lives. He was born, to all appearance, to an uneventful, unobserved existence. We read no remarkable action of the Apostle Matthew; as an Evangelist he is simple, orderly and accurate, as becomes a man of business, but the graphic energy of St. Mark, the pathos of St. Luke, the profundity of St. John are absent. Yet his greatness will outlive the world.

Now as Christ provided nobility and a career for this man of the people, so He does for all. "Are all apostles?" Nay, but all may become pillars in the temple of eternity. The gospel finds men plunged in monotony, in the routine of callings which machinery and the subdivision of labour make ever more colourless, spiritless, and dull. It is a small thing that it introduces them to a literature more sublime than Milton, more sincere and direct than Shakespere. It

brings their little lives into relationship with eternity. It braces them for a vast struggle, watched by a great cloud of witnesses. It gives meaning and beauty to the sordid present, and to the future a hope full of immortality. It brings the Christ of God nearer to the humblest than when of old He ate and drank with publicans and sinners.

THE CONTROVERSY CONCERNING FASTING.

"And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting: and they come and say unto Him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not?"—MARK ii. 18 (R.V.).

THE Pharisees had just complained to the disciples that Jesus ate and drank in questionable company. Now they join with the followers of the ascetic Baptist in complaining to Jesus that His disciples eat and drink at improper seasons, when others fast. And as Jesus had then replied, that being a Physician, He was naturally found among the sick, so He now answered, that being the Bridegroom, fasting in His presence is impossible: "Can the sons of the bridechamber fast while the Bridegroom is with them?" A new spirit is working in Christianity, far too mightily to be restrained by ancient usages; if the new wine be put into such wineskins it will spoil them, and itself be lost.

Hereupon three remarkable subjects call for attention: the immense personal claim advanced; the view which Christ takes of fasting; and, arising out of this, the principle which He applies to all external rites and ceremonies.

I. Jesus does not inquire whether the fasts of other men were unreasonable or not. In any case, He declares that His mere presence put everything on a new footing for His followers who could not fast simply

because He was by. Thus He assumes a function high above that of any prophet or teacher: He not only reveals duty, as a lamp casts light upon the compass by which men steer; but He modifies duty itself, as iron deflects the needle.

This is because He is the Bridegroom.

The disciples of John would hereupon recall his words of self-effacement; that He was only the friend of the Bridegroom, whose fullest joy was to hear the Bridegroom's exultant voice.

But no Jew could forget the Old Testament use of the phrase. It is clear from St. Matthew that this controversy followed immediately upon the last, when Jesus assumed a function ascribed to God Himself by the very passage from Hosea which He then quoted. Then He was the Physician for the soul's diseases; now He is the Bridegroom, in Whom centre its hopes, its joys, its affections, its new life. That position in the spiritual existence cannot be given away from God without idolatry. The same Hosea who makes God the Healer, gives to Him also, in the most explicit words, what Jesus now claims for Himself. "I will betroth thee unto Me for ever . . . I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord' (ii. 19, 20). Isaiah too declares "thy Maker is thy husband," and "as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (liv. 5; lxii. 5). And in Jeremiah, God remembers the love of Israel's espousals, who went after Him in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown (ii. 2). Now all this is transferred throughout the New Testament to Jesus. The Baptist is not alone in this respect. St. John regards the Bride as the wife of the Lamb (Rev. xxi. 9). St. Paul would fain present his Corinthian Church as

a pure virgin to Christ, as to one husband (2 Cor. xi. 2). For him, the absolute oneness of marriage is a mystery of the union betwixt Christ and His Church (Eph. v 32). If Jesus be not God, then a relation hitherto exclusively belonging to Jehovah, to rob Him of which is the adultery of the soul, has been systematically transferred by the New Testament to a creature. His glory has been given to another.

This remarkable change is clearly the work of Jesus Himself. The marriage supper of which He spoke is for the King's son. At His return the cry will be heard, Behold the Bridegroom cometh. In this earliest passage His presence causes the joy of the Bride, who said to the Lord in the Old Testament, Thou art my Husband (Hosea ii. 16).

There is not to be found in the Gospel of St. John a passage more certainly calculated to inspire, when Christ's dignity was assured by His resurrection and ascension, the adoration which His Church has always paid to the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

II. The presence of the Bridegroom dispenses with the obligation to fast. Yet it is beyond denial that fasting as a religious exercise comes within the circle of New Testament sanctions. Jesus Himself, when taking our burdens upon Him, as He had stooped to the baptism of repentance, condescended also to fast. He taught His disciples when they fasted to anoint their head and wash their face. The mention of fasting is indeed a later addition to the words "this kind (of demon) goeth not out but by prayer" (Mark ix. 29), but we know that the prophets and teachers of Antioch were fasting when bidden to consecrate Barnabas and Saul, and they fasted again and prayed before they laid their hands upon them (Acts xiii. 2, 3).

Thus it is right to fast, at times and from one point of view ; but at other times, and from Jewish and formal motives, it is unnatural and mischievous. It is right when the Bridegroom is taken away, a phrase which certainly does not cover all this space between the Ascension and the Second Advent, since Jesus still reveals Himself to His own though not unto the world, and is with His Church all the days. Scripture has no countenance for the notion that we lost by the Ascension in privilege or joy. But when the body would fain rise up against the spirit, it must be kept under and brought into subjection (1 Cor. ix. 27). When the closest domestic joys would interrupt the seclusion of the soul with God, they may be suspended, though but for a time (1 Cor. vii. 5). And when the supreme blessing of intercourse with God, the presence of the Bridegroom, is obscured or forfeited through sin, it will then be as inevitable that the loyal heart should turn away from worldly pleasures, as that the first disciples should reject these in the dread hours of their bereavement.

Thus Jesus abolished the superstition that grace may be had by a mechanical observance of a prescribed regimen at an appointed time. He did not deny, but rather implied the truth, that body and soul act and counteract so that spiritual impressions may be weakened and forfeited by untimely indulgence of the flesh.

By such teaching, Jesus carried forward the doctrine already known to the Old Testament. There it was distinctly announced that the return from exile abrogated those fasts which commemorated national calamities, so that "the fast of the fourth month, and of the fifth, and of the seventh and of the tenth shall be to the house of Israel joy and gladness, cheerful feasts" (Zech.

vii. 3, viii. 19). Even while these fasts had lasted they had been futile, because they were only formal. "When ye fasted and mourned, did ye at all fast unto me? And when ye eat, and when ye drink, do ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?" (Zech. vii. 5, 6). And Isaiah had plainly laid down the great rule, that a fast and an acceptable day unto the Lord was not a day to afflict the soul and bow the head, but to deny and discipline our selfishness for some good end, to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, to deal bread to the hungry, and to bring home the poor that is cast out (Isa. lviii. 5–7).

The true spirit of fasting breathes an ampler breath in any of the thousand forms of Christian self-denial, than in those petty abstinences, those microscopic observances, which move our wonder less by the superstition which expects them to bring grace than by the childishness which expects them to have any effect whatever.

III. Jesus now applies a great principle to all external rites and ceremonies. They have their value. As the wineskin retains the wine, so are feelings and aspirations aided, and even preserved, by suitable external forms. Without these, emotion would lose itself for want of restraint, wasted, like spilt wine, by diffuseness. And if the forms are unsuitable and outworn, the same calamity happens, the strong new feelings break through them, "and the wine perisheth, and the skins." In this respect, how many a sad experience of the Church attests the wisdom of her Lord; what losses have been suffered in the struggle between forms that had stiffened into archaic ceremonialism and new zeal demanding scope for its energy, between the antiquated

phrases of a bygone age and the new experience, knowledge and requirements of the next, between the frosty precisions of unsympathetic age and the innocent warmth and freshness of the young, too often, alas, lost to their Master in passionate revolt against restraints which He neither imposed nor smiled upon.

Therefore the coming of a new revelation meant the repeal of old observances, and Christ refused to sew His new faith like a patchwork upon ancient institutions, of which it would only complete the ruin. Thus He anticipated the decision of His apostles releasing the Gentiles from the law of Moses. And He bestowed on His Church an adaptiveness to various times and places, not always remembered by missionaries among the heathen, by fastidious critics of new movements at home, nor by men who would reduce the lawfulness of modern agencies to a question of precedent and archæology.

THE SABBATH.

"And it came to pass, that He was going on the sabbath day through the cornfields; and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And He said unto them, Did ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he entered into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which it is not lawful to eat save for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him? And He said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: so that the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath."—MARK ii. 23–28 (R.V.).

TWICE in succession Christ had now asserted the freedom of the soul against His Jewish antagonists. He was free to eat with sinners, for their good, and His followers were free to disregard fasts, because the

Bridegroom was with them. A third attack in the same series is prepared. The Pharisees now take stronger ground, since the law itself enforced the obligation of the Sabbath. Even Isaiah, the most free-spirited of all the prophets, in the same passage where he denounced the fasts of the self-righteous, bade men to keep their foot from the Sabbath (Isa. lviii. 13, 14). Here they felt sure of their position; and when they found the disciples, in a cornfield where the long stems had closed over the path, "making a way," which was surely forbidden labour, and this by "plucking the ears," which was reaping, and then rubbing these in their hands to reject the chaff, which was winnowing, they cried out in affected horror, Behold, why do they that which is not lawful? To them it mattered nothing that the disciples really hungered, and that abstinence, rather than the slight exertion which they condemned, would cause real inconvenience and unrest.

Perhaps the answer of our Lord has been as much misunderstood as any other words He ever spoke. It has been assumed that He spoke across the boundary between the new dispensation and the old, as One from whose movements the restraints of Judaism had entirely fallen away, to those who were still entangled And it has been inferred that the Fourth Commandment was no more than such a restraint, now thrown off among the rest. But this is quite a misapprehension both of His position and theirs. On earth He was a minister of the circumcision. He bade His disciples to observe and do all that was commanded from the seat of Moses. And it is by Old Testament precedent, and from Old Testament principles, that He now refutes the objection of the Pharisees. This is

what gives the passage half its charm, this discovery of freedom like our own in the heart of the stern old Hebrew discipline, as a fountain and flowers on the face of a granite crag, this demonstration that all we now enjoy is developed from what already lay in gern enfolded in the law.

David and his followers, when at extremity, had eaten the shewbread which it was not lawful for them to eat. It is a striking assertion. We should probably have sought a softer phrase. We should have said that in other circumstances it would have been unlawful, that only necessity made it lawful; we should have refused to look straight in the face the naked ugly fact that David broke the law. But Jesus was not afraid of any fact. He saw and declared that the priests in the Temple itself profaned the Sabbath when they baked the shewbread and when they circumcised children. They were blameless, not because the Fourth Commandment remained inviolate, but because circumstances made it right for them to profane the Sabbath. And His disciples were blameless also, upon the same principle, that the larger obligation overruled the lesser, that all ceremonial observance gave way to human need, that mercy is a better thing than sacrifice.

And thus it appeared that the objectors were themselves the transgressors; they had condemned the guiltless.

A little reflection will show that our Lord's bold method, His startling admission that David and the priests alike did that which was not lawful, is much more truly reverential than our soft modern compromises, our shifty devices for persuading ourselves that in various permissible and even necessary deviations

from prescribed observances, there is no real infraction of any law whatever.

To do this, we reduce to a minimum the demands of the precept. We train ourselves to think, not of its full extension, but of what we can compress it into. Therefore, in future, even when no urgency exists, the precept has lost all beyond this minimum; its sharp edges are filed away. Jesus leaves it to resume all its energy, when mercy no longer forbids the sacrifice.

The text, then, says nothing about the abolition of a Day of Rest. On the contrary, it declares that this day is not a Jewish but a universal ordinance, it is made for man. At the same time, it refuses to place the Sabbath among the essential and inflexible laws of right and wrong. It is made for man, for his physical repose and spiritual culture; man was not made for it, as he is for purity, truth, and godliness. Better for him to die than outrage these; they are the laws of his very being; he is royal by serving them; in obeying them he obeys his God. It is not thus with anything external, ceremonial, any ritual, any rule of conduct, however universal be its range, however permanent its sanctions. The Sabbath is such a rule, permanent, far-reaching as humanity, made "for man." But this very fact, Jesus tells us, is the reason why He Who represented the race and its interests, was "Lord even of the Sabbath."

Let those who deny the Divine authority of this great institution ponder well the phrase which asserts its universal range, and which finds it a large assertion of the mastery of Christ that He is Lord "even of the Sabbath." But those who have scruples about the change of day by which honour is paid to Christ's

resurrection, and those who would make burdensome and dreary, a horror to the young and a torpor to the old, what should be called a delight and honourable, these should remember that the ordinance is blighted, root and branch, when it is forbidden to minister to the physical or spiritual welfare of the human race.

CHAPTER III.

THE WITHERED HAND.

"And He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had his hand withered. And they watched Him, whether He would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse Him. And He saith unto the man that had his hand withered, Stand forth. And He saith unto them, Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good or to do harm? to save a life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth: and his hand was restored. And the Pharisees went out, and straightway with the Herodians took counsel against Him, how they might destroy Him."—MARK iii. 1–6 (R.V.).

IN the controversies just recorded, we have recognised the ideal Teacher, clear to discern and quick to exhibit the decisive point at issue, careless of small pedantries, armed with principles and precedents which go to the heart of the dispute.

But the perfect man must be competent in more than theory; and we have now a marvellous example of tact, decision and self-control in action. When Sabbath observance is again discussed, his enemies have resolved to push matters to extremity. They watch, no longer to cavil, but that they may accuse Him. It is in the synagogue; and their expectations are sharpened by the presence of a pitiable object, a man whose hand is not only paralyzed in the sinews, but withered up and hopeless. St. Luke tells us that it was the right

hand, which deepened his misery. And St. Matthew records that they asked Christ, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? thus urging Him by a challenge to the deed which they condemned. What a miserable state of mind! They believe that Jesus can work the cure, since this is the very basis of their plot; and yet their hostility is not shaken, for belief in a miracle is not conversion; to acknowledge a prodigy is one thing, and to surrender the will is quite another. Or how should we see around us so many Christians in theory, reprobates in life? They long to see the man healed, yet there is no compassion in this desire, hatred urges them to wish what mercy impels Christ to grant. But while He relieves the sufferer, He will also expose their malice. Therefore He makes His intention public, and whets their expectation, by calling the man forth into the midst. And then He meets their question with another: Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath day or evil, to save life or to kill? And when they preserved their calculated silence, we know how He pressed the question home, reminding them that not one of them would fail to draw His own sheep out of a pit upon the Sabbath day. Selfishness made the difference, for a man was better than a sheep, but did not, like the sheep, belong to them. They do not answer: instead of warning Him away from guilt, they eagerly await the incriminating act: we can almost see the spiteful subtle smile playing about their bloodless lips; and Jesus marks them well. He looked round about them in anger, but not in bitter personal resentment, for He was grieved at the hardness of their hearts, and pitied them also, even while enduring such contradiction of sinners against Himself. This is the first mention by St. Mark of that impressive gaze, afterwards so frequent

in every Gospel, which searched the scribe who answered well, and melted the heart of Peter.

And now, by one brief utterance, their prey breaks through their meshes. Any touch would have been a work, a formal infraction of the law. Therefore there is no touch, neither is the helpless man bidden to take up any burden, or instigated to the slightest ritual irregularity. Jesus only bids him do what was forbidden to none, but what had been impossible for him to perform; and the man succeeds, he does stretch forth his hand: he is healed: the work is done. Yet nothing has been done; as a work of healing not even a word has been said. For He who would so often defy their malice has chosen to show once how easily He can evade it, and not one of them is more free from any blame, however technical, than He. The Pharisees are so utterly baffled, so helpless in His hands, so "filled with madness" that they invoke against this new foe the help of their natural enemies, the Herodians. These appear on the stage because the immense spread of the Messianic movement endangers the Idumæan dynasty. When first the wise men sought an infant King of the Jews, the Herod of that day was troubled. That instinct which struck at His cradle is now reawakened, and will not slumber again until the fatal day when the new Herod shall set Him at nought and mock Him. In the meanwhile these strange allies perplex themselves with the hard question, How is it possible to destroy so acute a foe.

While observing their malice, and the exquisite skill which baffles it, we must not lose sight of other lessons. It is to be observed that no offence to hypocrites, no danger to Himself, prevented Jesus from removing human suffering. And also that He expects from the

man a certain co-operation involving faith: he must stand forth in the midst; every one must see his unhappiness; he is to assume a position which will become ridiculous unless a miracle is wrought. Then he must make an effort. In the act of stretching forth his hand the strength to stretch it forth is given; but he would not have tried the experiment unless he trusted before he discovered the power. Such is the faith demanded of our sin-stricken and helpless souls; a faith which confesses its wretchedness, believes in the good will of God and the promises of Christ, and receives the experience of blessing through having acted on the belief that already the blessing is a fact in the Divine volition.

Nor may we overlook the mysterious impalpable spiritual power which effects its purposes without a touch, or even an explicit word of healing import. What is it but the power of Him Who spake and it was done, Who commanded and it stood fast?

And all this vividness of look and bearing, this innocent subtlety of device combined with a boldness which stung His foes to madness, all this richness and verisimilitude of detail, this truth to the character of Jesus, this spiritual freedom from the trammels of a system petrified and grown rigid, this observance in a secular act of the requirements of the spiritual kingdom, all this wealth of internal evidence goes to attest one of the minor miracles which sceptics declare to be incredible.

THE CHOICE OF THE TWELVE.

"And Jesus with His disciples withdrew to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed: and from Judæa, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and beyond Jordan, and about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing what great things He did, came unto Him. And He spake to His disciples, that a little boat should wait on Him because of the crowd, lest they should throng Him: for He had healed many; insomuch that as many as had plagues pressed upon Him that they might touch Him. And the unclean spirits, whensoever they beheld Him, fell down before Him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And He charged them much that they should not make Him known. And He goeth up into the mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He Himself would: and they went unto Him. And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have authority to cast out devils: and Simon he surnamed Peter; and James the *son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and them He surnamed Boanerges, which is, Sons of thunder: and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the *son* of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Cananæan, and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed Him."—MARK iii. 7–19 (R.V.).

WE have reached a crisis in the labours of the Lord, when hatred which has become deadly is preparing a blow. The Pharisees are aware, by a series of experiences, that His method is destructive to their system, that He is too fearless to make terms with them, that He will strip the mask off their faces. Their rage was presently intensified by an immense extension of His fame. And therefore He withdrew from the plots which ripen most easily in cities, the hotbeds of intrigue, to the open coast. It is His first retreat before opposition, and careful readers of the Gospels must observe that whenever the pressure of His enemies became extreme, He turned for safety to the simple fishermen, among whom they had no party, since

they had preached no gospel to the poor, and that He was frequently conveyed by water from point to point, easily reached by followers, who sometimes indeed outran Him upon foot, but where treason had to begin its wiles afresh. Hither, perhaps camping along the beach, came a great multitude not only from Galilee but also from Judæa, and even from the capital, the headquarters of the priesthood, and by a journey of several days from Idumæa, and from Tyre and Sidon, so that afterwards, even there, He could not be hid. Many came to see what great things He did, but others bore with them some afflicted friend, or were themselves sore stricken by disease. And Jesus gave like a God, opening His hand and satisfying their desires, "for power went out of Him, and healed them all." Not yet had the unbelief of man restrained the compassion of His heart, and forced Him to exhibit another phase of the mind of God, by refusing to give that which is holy to the dogs. As yet, therefore, He healeth all their diseases. Then arose an unbecoming and irreverent rush of as many as had plagues to touch Him. A more subtle danger mingled itself with this peril from undue eagerness. For unclean spirits, who knew His mysterious personality, observed that this was still a secret, and was no part of His teaching, since His disciples could not bear it yet. Many months afterwards, flesh and blood had not revealed it even to Peter. And therefore the demons made malicious haste to proclaim Him the Son of God, and Jesus was obliged to charge them much that they should not make Him known. This action of His may teach His followers to be discreet. Falsehood indeed is always evil, but at times reticence is a duty, because certain truths are a medicine too powerful for some stages of

spiritual disease. The strong sun which ripens the grain in autumn, would burn up the tender germs of spring.

But it was necessary to teach as well as to heal. And Jesus showed his ready practical ingenuity, by arranging that a little boat should wait on Him, and furnish at once a pulpit and a retreat.

And now Jesus took action distinctly Messianic. The harvest of souls was plenteous, but the appointed labourers were unfaithful, and a new organisation was to take their place. The sacraments and the apostolate are indeed the only two institutions bestowed upon His Church by Christ Himself; but the latter is enough to show that, so early in His course, He saw His way to a revolution. He appointed twelve apostles, in clear allusion to the tribes of a new Israel, a spiritual circumcision, another peculiar people. A new Jerusalem should arise, with their names engraven upon its twelve foundation stones. But since all great changes arrive, not by manufacture but by growth, and in co-operation with existing circumstances, since nations and constitutions are not made but evolved, so was it also with the Church of Christ. The first distinct and formal announcement of a new sheepfold, entered by a new and living Way, only came when evoked by the action of His enemies in casting out the man who was born blind. By that time, the apostles were almost ready to take their place in it. They had learned much. They had watched the marvellous career to which their testimony should be rendered. By exercise they had learned the reality, and by failure the condition of the miraculous powers which they should transmit. But long before, at the period we have now reached, the apostles had been chosen under pressure of the

necessity to meet the hostility of the Pharisees with a counter-agency, and to spread the knowledge of His power and doctrine farther than One Teacher, however endowed, could reach. They were to be workers together with Him.

St. Mark tells us that He went up into the mountain, the well known hill of the neighbourhood, as St. Luke also implies, and there called unto Him whom He Himself would. The emphasis refutes a curious conjecture, that Judas may have been urged upon Him with such importunity by the rest that to reject became a worse evil than to receive him.* The choice was all His own, and in their early enthusiasm not one whom He summoned refused the call. Out of these He chose the Twelve, elect of the election.

We learn from St. Luke (v. 12) that His choice, fraught with such momentous issues, was made after a whole night of prayer, and from St. Matthew that He also commanded the whole body of His disciples to pray the Lord of the Harvest, not that they themselves should be chosen, but that He would send forth labourers into His harvest.

Now who were these by whose agency the downward course of humanity was reversed, and the traditions of a Divine faith were poured into a new mould?

It must not be forgotten that their ranks were afterwards recruited from the purest Hebrew blood and ripest culture of the time, The addition of Saul of Tarsus proved that knowledge and position were no more proscribed than indispensable. Yet is it in the last degree suggestive, that Jesus drew His personal followers from classes, not indeed oppressed by want,

* Lange. *Life of Christ*, ii. p. 179,

but lowly, unwarped by the prejudicies of the time, living in close contact with nature and with unsophisticated men, speaking and thinking the words and thoughts of the race and not of its coteries, and face to face with the great primitive wants and sorrows over which artificial refinement spreads a thin, but often a baffling veil.

With one exception the Nazarene called Galileans to His ministry; and the Carpenter was followed by a group of fishermen, by a despised publican, by a zealot whose love of Israel had betrayed him into wild and lawless theories at least, perhaps into evil deeds, and by several whose previous life and subsequent labours are unknown to earthly fame. Such are the Judges enthroned over the twelve tribes of Israel.

A mere comparison of the lists refutes the notion that any one Evangelist has worked up the materials of another, so diverse are they, and yet so easily reconciled. Matthew in one is Levi in another. Thaddæus, Jude, and Lebbæus, are interchangeable. The order of the Twelve differs in all the four lists, and yet there are such agreements, even in this respect, as to prove that all the Evangelists were writing about what they understood. Divide the Twelve into three ranks of four, and in none of the four catalogues will any name, or its equivalent, be found to have wandered out of its subdivision, out of the first, second, or third rank, in which doubtless that apostle habitually followed Jesus. Within each rank there is the utmost diversity of place, except that the foremost name in each is never varied; Peter, Philip, and the Lesser James, hold the first, fifth, and ninth place in every catalogue. And the traitor is always last. These are coincidences too slight for design and too striking for accident, they

are the natural signs of truth. For they indicate, without obtruding or explaining, some arrangement of the ranks, and some leadership of an individual in each.

Moreover, the group of the apostles presents a wonderfully lifelike aspect. Fear, ambition, rivalry, perplexity, silence when speech is called for, and speech when silence is befitting, vows, failures, and yet real loyalty, alas! we know them all. The incidents which are recorded of the chosen of Christ no inventor of the second century would have dared to devise; and as we study them, we feel the touch of genuine life; not of colossal statues such as repose beneath the dome of St. Peter's, but of men, genuine, simple and even somewhat childlike, yet full of strong, fresh, unsophisticated feeling, fit therefore to become a great power, and especially so in the capacity of witnesses for an ennobling yet controverted fact.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TWELVE.

"And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have authority to cast out devils: and Simon He surnamed Peter; and James the *son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and them He surnamed Boanerges, which is, Sons of thunder: and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the *son* of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Cananæan, and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed Him."—MARK iii. 14–19 (R.V.).

THE pictures of the Twelve, then, are drawn from a living group. And when they are examined in detail, this appearance of vitality is strengthened, by the richest and most vivid indications of individual character, such indeed as in several cases to throw light upon the choice of Jesus. To invent such touches is the last

attainment of dramatic genius, and the artist rarely succeeds except by deliberate and palpable character-painting. The whole story of Hamlet and of Lear is constructed with this end in view, but no one has ever conjectured that the Gospels were psychological studies. If, then, we can discover several well-defined characters, harmoniously drawn by various writers, as natural as the central figure is supernatural, and to be recognised equally in the common and the miraculous narratives, this will be an evidence of the utmost value.

We are all familiar with the impetuous vigour of St. Peter, a quality which betrayed him into grave and well-nigh fatal errors, but when chastened by suffering made him a noble and formidable leader of the Twelve. We recognise it when He says, "Thou shalt never wash my feet," "Though all men should deny Thee, yet will I never deny Thee," "Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of everlasting life," "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and in his rebuke of Jesus for self-sacrifice, and in his rash blow in the garden. Does this, the best established mental quality of any apostle, fail or grow faint in the miraculous stories which are condemned as the accretions of a later time? In such stories he is related to have cried out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," he would walk upon the sea to Jesus, he proposed to shelter Moses and Elijah from the night air in booths (a notion so natural to a bewildered man, so exquisite in its officious well-meaning absurdity as to prove itself, for who could have invented it?), he ventured into the empty sepulchre while John stood awe-stricken at the portal, he plunged into the lake to seek his risen Master on the shore, and he was presently the first to draw the net to land. Observe the restless curiosity

which beckoned to John to ask who was the traitor, and compare it with his question, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" But the second of these was after the resurrection, and in answer to a prophecy. Everywhere we find a real person and the same, and the vehemence is everywhere that of a warm heart, which could fail signally but could weep bitterly as well, which could learn not to claim, though twice invited, greater love than that of others, but when asked "Lovest thou Me" at all, broke out into the passionate appeal, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Dull is the ear of the critic which fails to recognise here the voice of Simon. Yet the story implies the resurrection.

The mind of Jesus was too lofty and grave for epigram; but He put the wilful self-reliance which Peter had to subdue even to crucifixion, into one delicate and subtle phrase: "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest." That self-willed stride, with the loins girded, is the natural gait of Peter, when he was young.

St. James, the first apostolic martyr, seems to have over-topped for a while his greater brother St. John, before whom he is usually named, and who is once distinguished as "the brother of James." He shares with him the title of a Son of Thunder (Mark iii. 17). They were together in desiring to rival the fiery and avenging miracle of Elijah, and to partake of the profound baptism and bitter cup of Christ. It is an undesigned coincidence in character, that while the latter of these events is recorded by St. Matthew and St. Mark, the former, which, it will be observed implies perfect confidence in the supernatural power of Christ, is found in St. Luke alone, who has not mentioned the title it

justifies so curiously (Matt. xx. 20; Mark x. 35; Luke ix. 54). It is more remarkable that he whom Christ bade to share his distinctive title with another, should not once be named as having acted or spoken by himself. With a fire like that of Peter, but no such power of initiative and of chieftainship, how natural it is that his appointed task was martyrdom. Is it objected that his brother also, the great apostle St. John, received only a share in that divided title? But the family trait is quite as palpable in him. The deeds of John were seldom wrought upon his own responsibility, never if we except the bringing of Peter into the palace of the high priest. He is a keen observer and a deep thinker. But he cannot, like his Master, combine the quality of leader with those of student and sage. In company with Andrew he found the Messiah. We have seen James leading him for a time. It was in obedience to a sign from Peter that He asked who was the traitor. With Peter, when Jesus was arrested, he followed afar off. It is very characteristic that he shrank from entering the sepulchre until Peter, coming up behind, went in first, although it was John who thereupon "saw and believed." *

With like discernment, he was the first to recognise Jesus beside the lake, but then it was equally natural that he should tell Peter, and follow in the ship, dragging the net to land, as that Peter should gird himself and plunge into the lake. Peter, when Jesus drew him aside, turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, with the same silent, gentle, and sociable affection, which had so recently joined him with

* It is also very natural that, in telling the story, he should remember how, while hesitating to enter, he "stooped down" to gaze, in the wild dawn of his new hope.

the saddest and tenderest of all companions underneath the cross. At this point there is a delicate and suggestive turn of phrase. By what incident would any pen except his own have chosen to describe the beloved disciple as Peter then beheld him? Assuredly we should have written, The disciple whom Jesus loved, who also followed Him to Calvary, and to whom He confided His mother. But from St. John himself there would have been a trace of boastfulness in such a phrase. Now the author of the Fourth Gospel, choosing rather to speak of privilege than service, wrote "The disciple whom Jesus loved, which also leaned back on His breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is he that betrayeth Thee?"

St. John was again with St. Peter at the Beautiful Gate, and although it was not he who healed the cripple, yet his co-operation is implied in the words, "Peter, fastening his eyes on him, *with John*." And when the Council would fain have silenced them, the boldness which spoke in Peter's reply was "the boldness of Peter and John."

Could any series of events justify more perfectly a title which implied much zeal, yet zeal that did not demand a specific unshared epithet? But these events are interwoven with the miraculous narratives.

Add to this the keenness and deliberation which so much of his story exhibits, which at the beginning tendered no hasty homage, but followed Jesus to examine and to learn, which saw the meaning of the orderly arrangment of the graveclothes in the empty tomb, which was first to recognise the Lord upon the beach, which before this had felt something in Christ's regard for the least and weakest, inconsistent with the forbidding of any one to cast out devils, and we

have the very qualities required to supplement those of Peter, without being discordant or uncongenial. And therefore it is with Peter, even more than with his brother, that we have seen John associated. In fact Christ, who sent out His apostles by two and two, joins these in such small matters as the tracking a man with a pitcher into the house where He would keep the Passover. And so, when Mary of Magdala would announce the resurrection, she found the penitent Simon in company with this loving John, comforted, and ready to seek the tomb where he met the Lord of all Pardons.

All this is not only coherent, and full of vital force, but it also strengthens powerfully the evidence for his authorship of the Gospel, written the last, looking deepest into sacred mysteries, and comparatively unconcerned for the mere flow of narrative, but tender with private and loving discourse, with thoughts of the protecting Shepherd, the sustaining Vine, the Friend Who wept by a grave, Who loved John, Who provided amid tortures for His mother, Who knew that Peter loved Him, and bade him feed the lambs—and yet thunderous as becomes a Boanerges, with indignation half suppressed against "the Jews" (so called as if he had renounced his murderous nation), against the selfish high-priest of "that same year," and against the son of perdition, for whom certain astute worldlings have surmised that his wrath was such as they best understand, personal, and perhaps a little spiteful. The temperament of John, revealed throughout, was that of August, brooding and warm and hushed and fruitful, with low rumblings of tempest in the night.

It is remarkable that such another family resemblance as between James and John exists between Peter and

Andrew. The directness and self-reliance of his greater brother may be discovered in the few incidents recorded of Andrew also. At the beginning, and after one interview with Jesus, when he finds his brother, and becomes the first of the Twelve to spread the gospel, he utters the short unhesitating announcement, "We have found the Messiah." When Philip is uncertain about introducing the Greeks who would see Jesus, he consults Andrew, and there is no more hesitation, Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And in just the same way, when Philip argues that two hundred pennyworth of bread are not enough for the multitude, Andrew intervenes with practical information about the five barley loaves and the two small fishes, insufficient although they seem. A man prompt and ready, and not blind to the resources that exist because they appear scanty.

Twice we have found Philip mentioned in conjunction with him. It was Philip, apparently accosted by the Greeks because of his Gentile name, who could not take upon himself the responsibility of telling Jesus of their wish. And it was he, when consulted about the feeding of the five thousand, who went off into a calculation of the price of the food required—two hundred pennyworth, he says, would not suffice. Is it not highly consistent with this slow deliberation, that he should have accosted Nathanael with a statement so measured and explicit: "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph." What a contrast to Andrew's terse announcement, "We have found the Messiah." And how natural that Philip should answer the objection, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" with the passionless reason-

able invitation, "Come and see." It was in the same unimaginative prosaic way that he said long after, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." To this comparatively sluggish temperament, therefore, Jesus Himself had to address the first demand He made on any. "Follow me," He said, and was obeyed. It would not be easy to compress into such brief and incidental notices a more graphic indication of character.

Of the others we know little except the names. The choice of Matthew, the man of business, is chiefly explained by the nature of his Gospel, so explicit, orderly, and methodical, and until it approaches the crucifixion, so devoid of fire.

But when we come to Thomas, we are once more aware of a defined and vivid personality, somewhat perplexed and melancholy, of little hope but settled loyalty.

All the three sayings reported of him belong to a dejected temperament: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him"—as if there could be no brighter meaning than death in Christ's proposal to interrupt a dead man's sleep. "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?"—these words express exactly the same despondent failure to apprehend. And so it comes to pass that nothing short of tangible experience will convince him of the resurrection. And yet there is a warm and devoted heart to be recognised in the proposal to share Christ's death, in the yearning to know whither He went, and even in that agony of unbelief, which dwelt upon the cruel details of suffering, until it gave way to one glad cry of recognition and of worship; therefore his demand was granted, although a richer blessing was reserved for those who, not having seen, believed.

THE APOSTLE JUDAS.

"And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed Him."—MARK iii. 19.

THE evidential value of what has been written about the apostles will, to some minds, seem to be overborne by the difficulties which start up at the name of Judas. And yet the fact that Jesus chose him—that awful fact which has offended many—is in harmony with all that we see around us, with the prodigious powers bestowed upon Napoleon and Voltaire, bestowed in full knowledge of the dark results, yet given because the issues of human freewill never cancel the trusts imposed on human responsibility. Therefore the issues of the freewill of Judas did not cancel the trust imposed upon his responsibility; and Jesus acted not on His foreknowledge of the future, but on the mighty possibilities, for good as for evil, which heaved in the bosom of the fated man as he stood upon the mountain sward.

In the story of Judas, the principles which rule the world are made visible. From Adam to this day men have been trusted who failed and fell, and out of their very downfall, but not by precipitating it, the plans of God have evolved themselves.

It is not possible to make such a study of the character of Judas as of some others of the Twelve. A traitor is naturally taciturn. No word of his draws our attention to the fact that he had gained possession of the bag, even though one who had sat at the receipt of custom might more naturally have become the treasurer. We do not hear his voice above the rest, until St. John explains the source of the general discontent, which remonstrated against the waste of ointment. He

is silent even at the feast, in despite of the words which revealed his guilty secret, until a slow and tardy question is wrung from him, not "Is it I, Lord?" but "Rabbi, is it I?" His influence is like that of a subtle poison, not discerned until its effects betray it.

But many words of Jesus acquire new force and energy when we observe that, whatever their drift beside, they were plainly calculated to influence and warn Iscariot. Such are the repeated and urgent warnings against covetousness, from the first parable, spoken so shortly after his vocation, which reckons the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things among the tares that choke the seed, down to the declaration that they who trust in riches shall hardly enter the kingdom. Such are the denunciations against hypocrisy, spoken openly, as in the Sermon on the Mount, or to His own apart, as when He warned them of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy, that secret vice which was eating out the soul of one among them. Such were the opportunities given to retreat without utter dishonour, as when He said, "Do ye also will to go away? . . . Did I not choose you the Twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John vi. 67, 70). And such also were the awful warnings given of the solemn responsibilities of special privileges. The exalted city which is brought down to hell, the salt which is trodden under foot, the men whose sin remained because they can claim to see, and still more plainly, the first that shall be last, and the man for whom it were good that he had not been born. In many besides the last of these, Judas must have felt himself sternly because faithfully dealt with. And the exasperation which always results from rejected warnings, the sense of a presence utterly repugnant to his nature, may

have largely contributed to his final and disastrous collapse.

In the life of Judas there was a mysterious impersonation of all the tendencies of godless Judaism, and his dreadful personality seems to express the whole movement of the nation which rejected Christ. We see this in the powerful attraction felt toward Messiah before His aims were understood, in the deadly estrangement and hostility which were kindled by the gentle and self-effacing ways of Jesus, in the treachery of Judas in the garden and the unscrupulous wiliness of the priests accusing Christ before the governor, in the fierce intensity of rage which turned his hands against himself and which destroyed the nation under Titus. Nay the very sordidness which made a bargain for thirty pieces of silver has ever since been a part of the popular conception of the race. We are apt to think of a gross love of money as inconsistent with intense passion, but in Shylock, the compatriot of Judas, Shakespeare combines the two.

Contemplating this blighted and sinister career, the lesson is burnt in upon the conscience, that since Judas by transgression fell, no place in the Church of Christ can render any man secure. And since, falling, he was openly exposed, none may flatter himself that the cause of Christ is bound up with his reputation, that the mischief must needs be averted which his downfall would entail, that Providence must needs avert from him the natural penalties of evil-doing. Though one was as the signet upon the Lord's hand, yet was he plucked thence. There is no security for any soul anywhere except where love and trust repose, upon the bosom of Christ.

Now if this be true, and if sin and scandal may con-

ceivably penetrate even the inmost circle of the chosen, how great an error is it to break, because of these offences, the unity of the Church, and institute some new communion, purer far than the Churches of Corinth and Galatia, which were not abandoned but reformed, and more impenetrable to corruption than the little group of those who ate and drank with Jesus.

CHRIST AND BEELZEBUB.

"And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and, By the prince of the devils casteth He out the devils. And He called them unto Him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if an house be divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan hath risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. But no one can enter into the house of the strong *man*, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong *man*; and then he will spoil his house."—MARK iii. 20–27 (R.V.).

WHILE Christ was upon the mountain with His more immediate followers, the excitement in the plain did not exhaust itself; for even when He entered into a house, the crowds prevented Him and His followers from taking necessary food. And when His friends heard of this, they judged Him as men who profess to have learned the lesson of His life still judge, too often, all whose devotion carries them beyond the boundaries of convention and of convenience. For there is a curious betrayal of the popular estimate of this world and the world to come, in the honour paid to those who cast away life in battle, or sap it slowly in pursuit of wealth or honours, and the contempt expressed for those who compromise it on behalf of souls, for which Christ died.

Whenever by exertion in any unselfish cause health is broken, or fortune impaired, or influential friends estranged, the follower of Christ is called an enthusiast, a fanatic, or even more plainly a man of unsettled mind. He may be comforted by remembering that Jesus was said to be beside Himself when teaching and healing left Him not leisure even to eat.

To this incessant and exhausting strain upon His energies and sympathies, St. Matthew applies the prophetic words, "Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases" (viii. 17). And it is worth while to compare with that passage and the one before us, Renan's assertion, that He traversed Galilee "in the midst of a perpetual fête," and that "joyous Galilee celebrated in fêtes the approach of the well-beloved." (*Vie de J.*, pp. 197, 202). The contrast gives a fine illustration of the inaccurate shallowness of the Frenchman's whole conception of the sacred life.

But it is remarkable that while His friends could not yet believe His claims, and even strove to lay hold on Him, no worse suspicion ever darkened the mind of those who knew Him best than that His reason had been disturbed. Not these called Him gluttonous and a winebibber. Not these blasphemed His motives. But the envoys of the priestly faction, partisans from Jerusalem, were ready with an atrocious suggestion. He was Himself possessed with a worse devil, before whom the lesser ones retired. By the prince of the devils He cast out the devils. To this desperate evasion, St. Matthew tells us, they were driven by a remarkable miracle, the expulsion of a blind and dumb spirit, and the perfect healing of his victim. Now the literature of the world cannot produce invective more terrible than Jesus had at His command for these very

scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. This is what gives majesty to His endurance. No personal insult, no resentment at His own wrong, could ruffle the sublime composure which, upon occasion, gave way to a moral indignation equally sublime. Calmly He calls His traducers to look Him in the face, and appeals to their own reason against their blasphemy. Neither kingdom nor house divided against itself can stand. And if Satan be divided against himself and his evil works, undoing the miseries and opening the eyes of men, his kingdom has an end. All the experience of the world since the beginning was proof enough that such a suicide of evil was beyond hope. The best refutation of the notion that Satan had risen up against himself and was divided was its clear expression. But what was the alternative? If Satan were not committing suicide, he was overpowered. There is indeed a fitful temporary reformation, followed by a deeper fall, which St. Matthew tells us that Christ compared to the cleansing of a house from whence the evil tenant has capriciously wandered forth, confident that it is still his own, and prepared to return to it with seven other and worse fiends. A little observation would detect such illusory improvement. But the case before them was that of an external summons reluctantly obeyed. It required the interference of a stronger power, which could only be the power of God. None could enter into the strong man's house, and spoil his goods, unless the strong man were first bound, "and then he will spoil his house." No more distinct assertion of the personality of evil spirits than this could be devised. Jesus and the Pharisees are not at all at issue upon this point. He does not scout as a baseless superstition their belief that evil spirits are at work in the world.

But He declares that His own work is the reversal of theirs. He is spoiling the strong man, whose terrible ascendancy over the possessed resembles the dominion of a man in his own house, among chattels without a will.

That dominion Christ declares that only a stronger can overcome, and His argument assumes that the stronger must needs be the finger of God, the power of God, come unto them. The supernatural exists only above us and below.

Ages have passed away since then. Innumerable schemes have been devised for the expulsion of the evils under which the world is groaning, and if they are evils of merely human origin, human power should suffice for their removal. The march of civilisation is sometimes appealed to. But what blessings has civilisation without Christ ever borne to savage men? The answer is painful: rum, gunpowder, slavery, massacre, small-pox, pulmonary consumption, and the extinction of their races, these are all it has been able to bestow. Education is sometimes spoken of, as if it would gradually heal our passions and expel vice and misery from the world, as if the worst crimes and most flagrant vices of our time were peculiar to the ignorant and the untaught, as if no forger had ever learned to write. And sometimes great things are promised from the advance of science, as if all the works of dynamite and nitro-glycerine, were, like those of the Creator, very good.

No man can be deceived by such flattering hopes, who rightly considers the volcanic energies, the frantic rage, the unreasoning all-sacrificing recklessness of human passions and desires. Surely they are set on fire of hell, and only heaven can quench the conflagra-

tion. Jesus has undertaken to do this. His religion has been a spell of power among the degraded and the lost; and when we come to consider mankind in bulk, it is plain enough that no other power has had a really reclaiming, elevating effect upon tribes and races. In our own land, what great or lasting work of reformation, or even of temporal benevolence, has ever gone forward without the blessing of religion to sustain it? Nowhere is Satan cast out but by the Stronger than he, binding him, overmastering the evil principle which tramples human nature down, as the very first step towards spoiling his goods. The spiritual victory must precede the removal of misery, convulsion and disease. There is no golden age for the world, except the reign of Christ.

"ETERNAL SIN."

"Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin."—MARK iii. 28, 29 (R.V.).

HAVING first shown that His works cannot be ascribed to Satan, Jesus proceeds to utter the most terrible of warnings, because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

"All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme, but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin."

What is the nature of this terrible offence? It is plain that their slanderous attack lay in the direction of it, since they needed warning; and probable that they had not yet fallen into the abyss, because they could still be warned against it. At least, if the guilt of some had

reached that depth, there must have been others involved in their offence who were still within reach of Christ's solemn admonition. It would seem therefore that in saying, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub . . . He hath an unclean spirit," they approached the confines and doubtful boundaries between that blasphemy against the Son of man which shall be forgiven, and the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which hath never forgiveness.

It is evident also that any crime declared by Scripture elsewhere to be incurable, must be identical with this, however different its guise, since Jesus plainly and indisputably announces that all other sins but this shall be forgiven.

Now there are several other passages of the kind. St. John bade his disciples to pray, when any saw a brother sinning a sin not unto death, "and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request" (1 John v. 16). It is idle to suppose that, in the case of this sin unto death, the Apostle only meant to leave his disciples free to pray or not to pray. If death were not certain, it would be their duty, in common charity, to pray. But the sin is so vaguely and even mysteriously referred to, that we learn little more from that passage than that it was an overt public act, of which other men could so distinctly judge the flagrancy that from it they should withhold their prayers. It has nothing in common with those unhappy wanderings of thought or affection which morbid introspection broods upon, until it pleads guilty to the unpardonable sin, for lapses of which no other could take cognizance. And in Christ's words, the very epithet, blasphemy, involves the same public,

open revolt against good.* And let it be remembered that every other sin shall be forgiven.

There are also two solemn passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews (vi. 4–6; x. 26–31). The first of these declares that it is impossible for men who once experienced all the enlightening and sweet influences of God, "and then fell away," to be renewed again unto repentance. But falling upon the road is very different from thus falling away, or how could Peter have been recovered? Their fall is total apostasy, "they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." They are not fruitful land in which tares are mingled; they bear only thorns and thistles, and are utterly rejected. And so in the tenth chapter, they who sin wilfully are men who tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and do despite (insult) unto the Spirit of grace.

Again we read that in the last time there will arise an enemy of God so unparalleled that his movement will outstrip all others, and be "*the* falling away," and he himself will be "the man of sin" and "the son of perdition," which latter title he only shares with Iscariot. Now the essence of his portentous guilt is that "he opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped": it is a monstrous egotism, "setting himself forth as God," and such a hatred of restraint as makes him "the lawless one" (2 Thess. ii. 3–10).

* "Theology would have been spared much trouble concerning this passage, and anxious timid souls unspeakable anguish, if men had adhered strictly to Christ's own expression. For it is not *a sin* against the Holy Ghost which is here spoken of, but *blasphemy* against the Holy Ghost."—Lange "*Life of Christ*," vol. ii. p. 269.

So far as these passages are at all definite in their descriptions, they are entirely harmonious. They describe no sin of the flesh, of impulse, frailty or passion, nor yet a spiritual lapse of an unguarded hour, of rash speculation, of erring or misled opinion. They speak not of sincere failure to accept Christ's doctrine or to recognise His commission, even though it breathe out threats and slaughters. They do not even apply to the dreadful sin of denying Christ in terror, though one should curse and swear, saying, I know not the man. They speak of a deliberate and conscious rejection of good and choice of evil, of the wilful aversion of the soul from sacred influences, the public denial and trampling under foot of Christ, the opposing of all that is called God.

And a comparison of these passages enables us to understand why this sin never can be pardoned. It is because good itself has become the food and fuel of its wickedness, stirring up its opposition, calling out its rage, that the apostate cannot be renewed again unto repentance. The sin is rather indomitable than unpardonable: it has become part of the sinner's personality; it is incurable, an eternal sin.

Here is nothing to alarm any mourner whose contrition proves that it has actually been possible to enew him unto repentance. No penitent has ever yet been rejected for this guilt, for no penitent has ever been thus guilty.

And this being so, here is the strongest possible encouragement for all who desire mercy. Every other sin, every other blasphemy shall be forgiven. Heaven does not reject the vilest whom the world hisses at, the most desperate and bloodstained whose life the world exacts in vengeance for his outrages. None is

lost but the hard and impenitent heart which treasures up for itself wrath against the day of wrath.

THE FRIENDS OF JESUS.

"And there come His mother and His brethren; and, standing without, they sent unto Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting about Him; and they say unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren without seek for Thee. And He answereth them, and saith, Who is My mother and My brethren? And looking round on them which sat round about Him He saith, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."—MARK iii. 31–35 (R. V.).

WE have lately read that the relatives of Jesus, hearing of His self-sacrificing devotion, sought to lay hold on Him, because they said, He is beside Himself. Their concern would not be lightened upon hearing of His rupture with the chiefs of their religion and their nation. And so it was, that while a multitude hung upon His lips, some unsympathizing critic, or perhaps some hostile scribe, interrupted Him with their message. They desired to speak with Him, possibly with rude intentions, while in any case, to grant their wish might easily have led to a painful altercation, offending weak disciples, and furnishing a scandal to His eager foes.

Their interference must have caused the Lord a bitter pang. It was sad that they were not among His hearers, but worse that they should seek to mar His work. To Jesus, endowed with every innocent human instinct, worn with labour and aware of gathering perils, they were an offence of the same kind as Peter made himself when he became the mouthpiece of the tempter. For their own sakes, whose faith He was yet to win, it was needful to be very firm. Moreover, He was soon to make it a law of the kingdom that men

should be ready for His sake to leave brethren, or sisters, or mother, and in so doing should receive back all these a hundredfold in the present time (x. 29, 30). To this law it was now His own duty to conform. Yet it was impossible for Jesus to be harsh and stern to a group of relatives with His mother in the midst of them; and it would be a hard problem for the finest dramatic genius to reconcile the conflicting claims of the emergency, fidelity to God and the cause, a striking rebuke to the officious interference of His kinsfolk, and a full and affectionate recognition of the relationship which could not make Him swerve. How shall He "leave" His mother and his brethren, and yet not deny His heart? How shall He be strong without being harsh?

Jesus reconciles all the conditions of the problem, as pointing to His attentive hearers, He pronounces these to be His true relatives, but yet finds no warmer term to express what He feels for them than the dear names of mother, sisters, brethren.

Observers whose souls were not warmed as He spoke, may have supposed that it was cold indifference to the calls of nature which allowed His mother and brethren to stand without. In truth, it was not that He denied the claims of the flesh, but that He was sensitive to other, subtler, profounder claims of the spirit and spiritual kinship. He would not carelessly wound a mother's or a brother's heart, but the life Divine had also its fellowships and its affinities, and still less could He throw these aside. No cold sense of duty detains Him with His congregation while affection seeks Him in the vestibule; no, it is a burning love, the love of a brother or even of a son, which binds Him to His people.

Happy are they who are in such a case. And Jesus gives us a ready means of knowing whether we are among those whom He so wonderfully condescends to love. "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven." Feelings may ebb, and self-confidence may be shaken, but obedience depends not upon excitement, and may be rendered by a breaking heart.

It is important to observe that this saying declares that obedience does not earn kinship; but only proves it, as the fruit proves the tree. Kinship must go before acceptable service; none can do the will of the Father who is not already the kinsman of Jesus, for He says, Whosoever shall (*hereafter*) do the will of My Father, the same is (*already*) My brother and sister and mother. There are men who would fain reverse the process, and do God's will in order to merit the brotherhood of Jesus. They would drill themselves and win battles for Him, in order to be enrolled among His soldiers. They would accept the gospel invitation as soon as they refute the gospel warnings that without Him they can do nothing, and that they need the creation of a new heart and the renewal of a right spirit within them. But when homage was offered to Jesus as a Divine teacher and no more, He rejoined, Teaching is not what is required: holiness does not result from mere enlightenment: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Because the new birth is the condition of all spiritual power and energy, it follows that if any man shall henceforth do God's will, he must already be of the family of Christ.

Men may avoid evil through self-respect, from early training and restraints of conscience, from temporal

prudence or dread of the future. And this is virtuous only as the paying of a fire-insurance is so. But secondary motives will never lift any man so high as to satisfy this sublime standard, the doing of the will of the Father. That can only be attained, like all true and glorious service in every cause, by the heart, by enthusiasm, by love. And Jesus was bound to all who loved His Father by as strong a cord as united His perfect heart with brother and sister and mother.

But as there is no true obedience without relationship, so is there no true relationship unfollowed by obedience. Christ was not content to say, Whoso doeth God's will is My kinsman: He asked, Who is My kinsman? and gave this as an exhaustive reply. He has none other. Every sheep in His fold hears His voice and follows Him. We may feel keen emotions as we listen to passionate declamations, or kneel in an excited prayer-meeting, or bear our part in an imposing ritual; we may be moved to tears by thinking of the dupes of whatever heterodoxy we most condemn; tender and soft emotions may be stirred in our bosom by the story of the perfect life and Divine death of Jesus; and yet we may be as far from a renewed heart as was that ancient tyrant from genuine compassion, who wept over the brevity of the lives of the soldiers whom he sent into a wanton war.

Mere feeling is not life. It moves truly; but only as a balloon moves, rising by virtue of its emptiness, driven about by every blast that veers, and sinking when its inflation is at an end. But mark the living creature poised on widespread wings; it has a will, an intention, and an initiative, and as long as its life is healthy and unenslaved, it moves at its own good pleasure. How shall I know whether or not I am

a true kinsman of the Lord? By seeing whether I advance, whether I work, whether I have real and practical zeal and love, or whether I have grown cold, and make more allowance for the flesh than I used to do, and expect less from the spirit. Obedience does not produce grace. But it proves it, for we can no more bear fruit except we abide in Christ, than the branch that does not abide in the vine.

Lastly, we observe the individual love, the personal affection of Christ for each of His people. There is a love for masses of men and philanthropic causes, which does not much observe the men who compose the masses, and upon whom the causes depend. Thus, one may love his country, and rejoice when her flag advances, without much care for any soldier who has been shot down, or has won promotion. And so we think of Africa or India, without really feeling much about the individual Egyptian or Hindoo. Who can discriminate and feel for each one of the multitudes included in such a word as Want, or Sickness, or Heathenism? And judging by our own frailty, we are led to think that Christ's love can mean but little beyond this. As a statesman who loves the nation may be said, in some vague way, to love and care for me, so people think of Christ as loving and pitying us because we are items in the race He loves. But He has eyes and a heart, not only for all, but for each one. Looking down the shadowy vista of the generations, every sigh, every broken heart, every blasphemy, is a separate pang to His all-embracing heart. "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw *thee*," lonely, unconscious, undistinguished drop in the tide of life, one leaf among the myriads which rustle and fall in the vast forest of

existence. St. Paul speaks truly of Christ "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." He shall bring every secret sin to judgment, and shall we so far wrong Him as to think His justice more searching, more penetrating, more individualizing than His love, His memory than His heart? It is not so. The love He offers adapts itself to every age and sex: it distinguishes brother from sister, and sister again from mother. It is mindful of "the least of these My brethren." But it names no Father except One.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PARABLES.

"**And again He** began to teach by the sea side. **And there is** gathered unto Him a very great multitude, so that He entered into a boat, and sat in the sea; and all the multitude were by the sea on the land. And He taught them many things in parables, and said unto them in His teaching. . . .

"And when He was alone, they that were about Him with the twelve asked of Him the parables. And He said unto them, Unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest haply they should turn again, and it should be forgiven them. And He saith unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how shall ye know all the parables?"—MARK iv. 1, 2, 10–13 (R.V.).

AS opposition deepened, and to a vulgar ambition, the temptation to retain disciples by all means would have become greater, Jesus began to teach in parables. We know that He had not hitherto done so, both by the surprise of the Twelve, and by the necessity which He found, of giving them a clue to the meaning of such teachings, and so to "all the parables." His own ought to have understood. But He was merciful to the weakness which confessed its failure and asked for instruction.

And yet He foresaw that they which were without would discern no spiritual meaning in such discourse. It was to have, at the same time, a revealing and a

baffling effect, and therefore it was peculiarly suitable for the purposes of a Teacher watched by vindictive foes. Thus, when cross-examined about His authority by men who themselves professed to know not whence John's baptism was, He could refuse to be entrapped, and yet tell of One Who sent His own Son, His Beloved, to receive the fruit of the vineyard.

This diverse effect is derived from the very nature of the parables of Jesus. They are not, like some in the Old Testament, mere fables, in which things occur that never happen in real life. Jotham's trees seeking a king, are as incredible as Æsop's fox leaping for grapes. But Jesus never uttered a parable which was not true to nature, the kind of thing which one expects to happen. We cannot say that a rich man in hell actually spoke to Abraham in heaven. But if he could do so, of which we are not competent to judge, we can well believe that he would have spoken just what we read, and that his pathetic cry, "Father Abraham," would have been as gently answered, "Son, remember." There is no ferocity in the skies; neither has the lost soul become a fiend. Everything commends itself to our judgment. And therefore the story not only illustrates, but appeals, enforces, almost proves.

God in nature does not arrange that all seeds should grow: men have patience while the germ slowly fructifies, they know not how; in all things but religion such sacrifices are made, that the merchant sells all to buy one goodly pearl; an earthly father kisses his repentant prodigal; and even a Samaritan can be neighbour to a Jew in his extremity. So the world is constructed: such is even the fallen human heart. Is it not reasonable to believe that the same principles will extend

farther; that as God governs the world of matter so He may govern the world of spirits, and that human helpfulness and clemency will not outrun the graces of the Giver of all good?

This is the famous argument from analogy, applied long before the time of Butler, to purposes farther-reaching than his. But there is this remarkable difference, that the analogy is never pressed, men are left to discover it for themselves, or at least, to ask for an explanation, because they are conscious of something beyond the tale, something spiritual, something which they fain would understand.

Now this difference is not a mannerism; it is intended. Butler pressed home his analogies because he was striving to silence gainsayers. His Lord and ours left men to discern or to be blind, because they had already opportunity to become His disciples if they would. The faithful among them ought to be conscious, or at least they should now become conscious, of the God of grace in the God of nature. To them the world should be eloquent of the Father's mind. They should indeed find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones. He spoke to the sensitive mind, which would understand Him, as a wife reads her husband's secret joys and sorrows by signs no stranger can understand. Even if she fails to comprehend, she knows there is something to ask about. And thus, when they were alone, the Twelve asked Him of the parables. When they were instructed, they gained not only the moral lesson, and the sweet pastoral narrative, the idyllic picture which conveyed it, but also the assurance imparted by recognizing the same mind of God which is revealed in His world, or justified by the best impulses of humanity. Therefore, no parable is sensational.

It cannot root itself in the exceptional, the abnormal events on which men do not reckon, which come upon us with a shock. For we do not argue from these to daily life.

But while this mode of teaching was profitable to His disciples, and protected Him against His foes, it had formidable consequences for the frivolous empty followers after a sign. Because they were such they could only find frivolity and lightness in these stories; the deeper meaning lay farther below the surface than such eyes could pierce. Thus the light they had abused was taken from them. And Jesus explained to His disciples that, in acting thus, He pursued the fixed rule of God. The worst penalty of vice is that it loses the knowledge of virtue, and of levity that it cannot appreciate seriousness. He taught in parables, as Isaiah prophesied, "that seeing they may see, and not perceive, and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest haply they should turn again and it should be forgiven them." These last words prove how completely penal, how free from all caprice, was this terrible decision of our gentle Lord, that precautions must be taken against evasion of the consequences of crime. But it is a warning by no means unique. He said, "The things which make for thy peace . . . are hid from thine eyes" (Luke xix. 42). And St. Paul said, "If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing"; and still more to the point, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (2 Cor. iv. 3; 1 Cor. ii. 14). To this law Christ, in speaking by parables, was conscious that He conformed.

But now let it be observed how completely this

mode of teaching suited our Lord's habit of mind. If men could finally rid themselves of His Divine claim, they would at once recognise the greatest of the sages; and they would also find in Him the sunniest, sweetest and most accurate discernment of nature, and its more quiet beauties, that ever became a vehicle for moral teaching. The sun and rain bestowed on the evil and the good, the fountain and the trees which regulate the waters and the fruit, the death of the seed by which it buys its increase, the provision for bird and blossom without anxiety of theirs, the preference for a lily over Solomon's gorgeous robes, the meaning of a red sky at sunrise and sunset, the hen gathering her chickens under her wing, the vine and its branches, the sheep and their shepherd, the lightning seen over all the sky, every one of these needed only to be re-set and it would have become a parable.

All the Gospels, including the fourth, are full of proofs of this rich and attractive endowment, this warm sympathy with nature; and this fact is among the evidences that they all drew the same character, and drew it faithfully.

THE SOWER.

"Hearken: Behold the sower went forth to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some *seed* fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured it. And other fell on the rocky *ground*, where it had not much earth; and straightway it sprang up, because it had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And other fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And others fell into the good ground, and yielded fruit, growing up and increasing; and brought forth, thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. And He said, Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. . . .

"The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the vay side,

where the word is sown; and when they have heard, straightway cometh Satan, and taketh away the word which hath been sown in them. And these in like manner are they that are sown upon the rocky *places*, who, when they have heard the word, straightway receive it with joy; and they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway they stumble. And others are they that are sown among the thorns; these are they that have heard the word, and the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And those are they that were sown upon the good ground; such as hear the word, and accept it, and bear fruit, thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundredfold."—MARK iv. 3–9, 14–20 (R.V.).

"HEARKEN" Jesus said; willing to caution men against the danger of slighting His simple story, and to impress on them that it conveyed more than met their ears. In so doing He protested in advance against fatalistic abuses of the parable, as if we were already doomed to be hard, or shallow, or thorny, or fruitful soil. And at the close He brought out still more clearly His protest against such doctrine, by impressing upon all, that if the vitalising seed were the imparted word, it was their part to receive and treasure it. Indolence and shallowness *must* fail to bear fruit: that is the essential doctrine of the parable; but it is not necessary that we should remain indolent or shallow: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

And when the Epistle to the Hebrews reproduces the image of land which bringeth forth thorns and thistles, our Revised Version rightly brings out the fact, on which indeed the whole exhortation depends, that the same piece of land might have borne herbs meet for those for whose sake it is tilled (vi. 7).

Having said "Hearken," Jesus added, "Behold." It has been rightly inferred that the scene was before

their eyes. Very possibly some such process was within sight of the shore on which they were gathered; but in any case, a process was visible, if they would but see, of which the tilling of the ground was only a type. A nobler seed was being scattered for a vaster harvest, and it was no common labourer, but the true sower, who went forth to sow. "The sower soweth the word." But who was he? St. Matthew tells us "the sower is the Son of man," and whether the words were expressly uttered, or only implied, as the silence of St. Mark and St. Luke might possibly suggest, it is clear that none of His disciples could mistake His meaning. Ages have passed and He is the sower still, by whatever instrument He works, for we are God's husbandry as well as God's building. And the seed is the Word of God, so strangely able to work below the surface of human life, invisible at first, yet vital, and grasping from within and without, from secret thoughts and from circumstances, as from the chemical ingredients of the soil and from the sunshine and the shower, all that will contribute to its growth, until the field itself is assimilated, spread from end to end with waving ears, a corn-field now. This is why Jesus in His second parable did not any longer say "the seed is the word," but "the good seed are the sons of the kingdom" (Matt. xiii. 38). The word planted was able to identify itself with the heart.

And this seed, the Word of God, is sown broadcast as all our opportunities are given. A talent was not refused to him who buried it. Judas was an apostle. Men may receive the grace of God in vain, and this in more ways than one. On some it produces no vital impression whatever; it lies on the surface of a mind which the feet of earthly interests have trodden hard.

There is no chance for it to expand, to begin its operation by sending out the smallest tendrils to grasp, to appropriate anything, to take root. And it may well be doubted whether any soul, wholly indifferent to religious truth, ever retained even its theoretic knowledge long. The foolish heart is darkened. The fowls of the air catch away for ever the priceless seed of eternity. Now it is of great importance to observe how Jesus explained this calamity. We should probably have spoken of forgetfulness, the fading away of neglected impressions, or at most of some judicial act of providence hiding the truth from the careless. But Jesus said, "straightway cometh Satan and taketh away the word which hath been sown in them." No person can fairly explain this text away, as men have striven to explain Christ's language to the demoniacs, by any theory of the use of popular language, or the toleration of harmless notions. The introduction of Satan into this parable is unexpected and uncalled for by any demand save one, the necessity of telling all the truth. It is true therefore that an active and deadly enemy of souls is at work to quicken the mischief which neglect and indifference would themselves produce, that evil processes are helped from beneath as truly as good ones from above; that the seed which is left to-day upon the surface may be maliciously taken thence long before it would have perished by natural decay; that men cannot reckon upon stopping short in their contempt of grace, since what they neglect the devil snatches quite away from them. And as seed is only safe from fowls when buried in the soil, so is the word of life only safe against the rapacity of hell when it has sunk down into our hearts.

In the story of the early Church, St. Paul sowed upon such ground as this in Athens. Men who spent their time in the pursuit of artistic and cultivated novelties, in hearing and telling some new thing, mocked the gospel, or at best proposed to hear its preacher yet again. How long did such a purpose last?

But there are other dangers to dread, besides absolute indifference to truth. And the first of these is a too shallow and easy acquiescence. The message of salvation is designed to affect the whole of human life profoundly. It comes to bind a strong man armed, it summons easy and indifferent hearts to wrestle against spiritual foes, to crucify the flesh, to die daily. On these conditions it offers the noblest blessings. But the conditions are grave and sobering. If one hears them without solemn and earnest searching of heart, he has only, at the best, apprehended half the message. Christ has warned us that we cannot build a tower without sitting down to count our means, nor fight a hostile king without reckoning the prospects of invasion. And it is very striking to compare the gushing and impulsive sensationalism of some modern schools, with the deliberate and circumspect action of St. Paul, even after God had been pleased miraculously to reveal His Son in him. He went into seclusion. He returned to Damascus to his first instructor. Fourteen years afterwards he deliberately laid his gospel before the Apostles, lest by any means he should be running or had run in vain. Such is the action of one penetrated with a sense of reality and responsibility in his decision; it is not the action likely to result from teaching men that it suffices to "say you believe" and to be "made happy." And in this parable, our Saviour

has given striking expression to His judgment of the school which relies upon mere happiness. Next to those who leave the seed for Satan to snatch away, He places them "who, when they have heard the word, straightway receive it with joy." They have taken the promises without the precepts, they have hoped for the crown without the cross. Their type is the thin layer of earth spread over a shelf of rock. The water, which cannot sink down, and the heat reflected up from the stone, make it for a time almost a hot bed. Straightway the seed sprang up, because it had no deepness of earth. But the moisture thus detained upon the surface vanished utterly in time of drought; the young roots, unable to penetrate to any deeper supplies, were scorched; and it withered away. That superficial heat and moisture was impulsive emotion, glad to hear of heaven, and love, and privilege, but forgetful to mortify the flesh, and to be partaker with Christ in His death. The roots of a real Christian life must strike deeper down. Consciousness of sin and its penalty and of the awful price by which that penalty has been paid, consciousness of what life should have been and how we have degraded it, consciousness of what it must yet be made by grace —these do not lead to joy so immediate, so impulsive, as the growth of this shallow vegetation. A mature and settled joy is among "the fruits of the spirit:" it is not the first blade that shoots up.

Now because the sense of sin and duty and atonement have not done their sobering work, the feelings, so easily quickened, are also easily perverted: "When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway they stumble." These were not counted upon. Neither trouble of mind nor opposition of wicked men was

included in the holiday scheme of the life Divine. And their pressure is not counter-weighted by that of any deep convictions. The roots have never penetrated farther than temporal calamities and trials can reach. In the time of drought they have *not* enough. They endure, but only for a while.

St. Paul sowed upon just such soil in Galatia. There his hearers spoke of such blessedness that they would have plucked out their eyes for him. But he became their enemy because he told them all the truth, when only a part was welcome. And as Christ said, Straightway they stumble, so St. Paul had to marvel that they were so soon subverted.

If indifference be the first danger, and shallowness the second, mixed motive is the third. Men there are who are very earnest, and far indeed from slight views of truth, who are nevertheless in sore danger, because they are equally earnest about other things; because they cannot resign this world, whatever be their concern about the next; because the soil of their life would fain grow two inconsistent harvests. Like seed sown among thorns, "choked" by their entangling roots and light-excluding growths, the word in such hearts, though neither left upon a hard surface nor forbidden by rock to strike deep into the earth, is overmastered by an unworthy rivalry. A kind of vegetation it does produce, but not such as the tiller seeks: the word becometh unfruitful. It is the same lesson as when Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Perhaps it is the one most needed in our time of feverish religious controversy and heated party spirit, when every one hath a teaching, hath a revelation,

hath a tongue, hath an interpretation, but scarcely any have denied the world and taken in exchange a cross.

St. Paul found a thorny soil in Corinth which came behind in no gift, if only gifts had been graces, but was indulgent, factious and selfish, puffed up amid flagrant vices, one hungry and another drunken, while wrangling about the doctrine of the resurrection.

The various evils of this parable are all of them worldliness, differently manifested. The deadening effect of habitual forgetfulness of God, treading the soil so hard that no seed can enter it; the treacherous effect of secret love of earth, a buried obstruction refusing to admit the gospel into the recesses of the life, however it may reach the feelings; and the fierce and stubborn competition of worldly interests, wherever they are not resolutely weeded out, against these Jesus spoke His earliest parable. And it is instructive to review the foes by which He represented His Gospel as warred upon. The personal activity of Satan; "tribulation or persecution" from without, and within the heart "cares" rather for self than for the dependent and the poor, "deceitfulness of riches" for those who possess enough to trust in, or to replace with a fictitious importance the only genuine value, which is that of character (although men are still esteemed for being "worth" a round sum, a strange estimate, to be made by Christians, of a being with a soul burning in him); and alike for rich and poor, "the lusts of other things," since none is too poor to covet, and none so rich that his desires shall not increase, like some diseases, by being fed.

Lastly, we have those on the good ground, who are not described by their sensibilities or their enjoyments,

but by their loyalty. They "hear the word and accept it and bear fruit." To accept is what distinguishes them alike from the wayside hearers into whose attention the word never sinks, from the rocky hearers who only receive it with a superficial welcome, and from the thorny hearers who only give it a divided welcome. It is not said, as if the word were merely the precepts, that they obey it. The sower of this seed is not he who bade the soldier not to do violence, and the publican not to extort: it is He who said, Repent, and believe the gospel. He implanted new hopes, convictions, and affections, as the germ which should unfold in a new life. And the good fruit is borne by those who honestly "accept" His word.

Fruitfulness is never in the gospel the condition by which life is earned, but it is always the test by which to prove it. In all the accounts of the final judgment, we catch the principle of the bold challenge of St. James, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." The talent must produce more talents, and the pound more pounds; the servant must have his loins girt and a light in his hand; the blessed are they who did unto Jesus the kindness they did unto the least of His brethren, and the accursed are they who did it not to Jesus in His people.

We are not wrong in preaching that honest faith in Christ is the only condition of acceptance, and the way to obtain strength for good works. But perhaps we fail to add, with sufficient emphasis, that good works are the only sufficient evidence of real faith, of genuine conversion. Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened and who constrained the Apostle to abide in her house, was

converted as truly as the gaoler who passed through all the vicissitudes of despair, trembling and astonishment, and belief.

"They bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and an hundredfold." And all are alike accepted. But the parable of the pounds shows that all are not alike rewarded, and in equal circumstances superior efficiency wins a superior prize. One star differeth from another star in glory, and they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the sun for ever.

LAMP AND STAND.

"And He said unto them, Is the lamp brought to be put under the bushel, or under the bed? and not to be put on the stand? For there is nothing hid, save that it should be manifested; neither was anything made secret, but that it should come to light. If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear. And He said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you: and more shall be given unto you. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath."—MARK iv. 21–25 (R. V.).

JESUS had now taught that the only good ground was that in which the good seed bore fruit. And He adds explicitly, that men receive the truth in order to spread it, and are given grace that they may become, in turn, good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

"Is the lamp brought to be put under the bushel or under the bed, and not to be put on the stand?" The language may possibly be due, as men have argued, to the simple conditions of life among the Hebrew peasantry, who possessed only one lamp, one corn-measure, and perhaps one bed. All the greater marvel is it that amid such surroundings He should have announced, and not in vain, that His disciples, His

Church, should become the light of all humanity, "the lamp." Already He had put forward the same claim even more explicitly, saying, "Ye are the light of the world." And in each case, He spoke not in the intoxication of pride or self-assertion, but in all gravity, and as a solemn warning. The city on the hill could not be hid. The lamp would burn dimly under the bed; it would be extinguished entirely by the bushel. Publicity is the soul of religion, since religion is light. It is meant to diffuse itself, to be, as He expressed it, like leaven which may be hid at first, but cannot be concealed, since it will leaven all the lump. And so, if He spoke in parables, and consciously hid His meaning by so doing, this was not to withdraw His teaching from the masses, it was to shelter the flame which should presently illuminate all the house. Nothing was hid, save that it should be manifested, nor made secret, but that it should come to light. And it has never been otherwise. Our religion has no privileged inner circle, no esoteric doctrine; and its chiefs, when men glorified one or another, asked, What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed. Agents only, for conveying to others what they had received from God. And thus He Who now spoke in parables, and again charged them not to make Him known, was able at the end to say, In secret have I spoken nothing. Therefore He repeats with emphasis His former words, frequent on His lips henceforward, and ringing through the messages He spoke in glory to His Churches. If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear. None is excluded but by himself.

Yet another caution follows. If the seed be the Word, there is sore danger from false teaching; from strewing

the ground with adulterated grain. St. Mark, indeed, has not recorded the Parable of the Tares. But there are indications of it, and the same thought is audible in this saying, "Take heed what ye hear." The added words are a little surprising: "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you, and more shall be given unto you." The last clause expresses exactly the principle on which the forfeited pound was given to Him who had ten pounds already, the open hand of God lavishing additional gifts upon him who was capable of using them. But does not the whole statement seem to follow more suitably upon a command to beware what we teach, and thus "mete" to others, than what we hear? A closer examination finds in this apparent unfitness, a deeper harmony of thought. To "accept" the genuine word is the same as to bring forth fruit for God; it is to reckon with the Lord of the talents, and to yield the fruit of the vineyard. And this is to "mete," not indeed unto man, but unto God, Who shows Himself froward with the froward, and from him that hath not, whose possession is below his accountability, takes away even that he hath, but gives exceeding abundantly above all they ask or think to those who have, who are not disobedient to the heavenly calling.

All this is most delicately connected with what precedes it; and the parables, hiding the truth from some, giving it authority, and colour, and effect to others, were a striking example of the process here announced.

Never was the warning to be heedful what we hear, more needed than at present. Men think themselves free to follow any teacher, especially if he be eloquent, to read any book, if only it be in demand, and to dis-

cuss any theory, provided it be fashionable, while perfectly well aware that they are neither earnest inquirers after truth, nor qualified champions against its assailants. For what then do they read and hear? For the pleasure of a rounded phrase, or to augment the prattle of conceited ignorance in a drawing-room.

Do we wonder when these players with edged tools injure themselves, and become perverts or agnostics? It would be more wonderful if they remained unhurt, since Jesus said, "Take heed what ye hear . . . from him that hath not shall be taken even that he hath." A rash and uninstructed exposure of our intellects to evil influences, is meting to God with an unjust measure, as really as a wilful plunge into any other temptation, since we are bidden to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the spirit as well as of the flesh.

THE SEED GROWING SECRETLY.

"And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come."—MARK iv. 26-29 (R.V.).

ST. MARK alone records this parable of a sower who sleeps by night, and rises for other business by day, and knows not how the seed springs up. That is not the sower's concern: all that remains for him is to put forth the sickle when the harvest is come.

It is a startling parable for us who believe in the fostering care of the Divine Spirit. And the paradox is forced on our attention by the words "the earth beareth fruit of herself," contrasting strangely as it

does with such other assertions, as that the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, that without Christ we can do nothing, and that when we live it is not we but Christ who liveth in us.

It will often help us to understand a paradox if we can discover another like it. And exactly such an one as this will be found in the record of creation. God rested on the seventh day from all His work, yet we know that His providence never slumbers, that by Him all things consist, and that Jesus defended His own work of healing on a Sabbath day by urging that the Sabbath of God was occupied in gracious provision for His world. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Thus the rest of God from creative work says nothing about His energies in that other field of providential care. Exactly so Jesus here treats only of what may be called the creative spiritual work, the deposit of the seed of life. And the essence of this remarkable parable is the assertion that we are to expect an orderly, quiet and gradual development from this principle of life, not a series of communications from without, of additional revelations, of semi-miraculous interferences. The life of grace is a natural process in the supernatural sphere. In one sense it is all of God, who maketh His sun to rise, and sendeth rain, without which the earth could bear no fruit of herself. In another sense we must work out our own salvation all the more earnestly because it is God that worketh in us.

Now this parable, thus explained, has been proved true in the wonderful history of the Church. She has grown, not only in extent but by development, as marvellously as a corn of wheat which is now a waving wheat-stem with its ripening ear. When Cardinal

Newman urged that an ancient Christian, returning to earth, would recognise the services and the Church of Rome, and would fail to recognise ours, he was probably mistaken. To go no farther, there is no Church on earth so unlike the Churches of the New Testament as that which offers praise to God in a strange tongue. St. Paul apprehended that a stranger in such an assembly would reckon the worshippers mad. But in any case the argument forgets that the whole kingdom of God is to resemble seed, not in a drawer, but in the earth, and advancing towards the harvest. It must "die" to much if it will bring forth fruit. It must acquire strange bulk, strange forms, strange organisms. It must become, to those who only knew it as it was, quite as unrecognisable as our Churches are said to be. And yet the changes must be those of logical growth, not of corruption. And this parable tells us they must be accomplished without any special interference such as marked the sowing time. Well then, the parable is a prophecy. Movement after movement has modified the life of the Church. Even its structure is not all it was. But these changes have every one been wrought by human agency, they have come from within it, like the force which pushes the germ out of the soil, and expands the bud into the full corn in the ear. There has been no grafting knife to insert a new principle of richer life; the gospel and the sacraments of our Lord have contained in them the promise and potency of all that was yet to be unfolded, all the gracefulness and all the fruit. And these words, "the earth beareth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear," each so different, and yet so dependent on what preceded, teach us two great ecclesiastical lessons.

They condemn the violent and revolutionary changes, which would not develop old germs but tear them open or perhaps pull them up. Much may be distasteful to the spirit of sordid utilitarianism; a mere husk, which nevertheless within it shelters precious grain, otherwise sure to perish. If thus we learn to respect the old, still more do we learn that what is new has also its all-important part to play. The blade and the ear in turn are innovations. We must not condemn those new forms of Christian activity, Christian association, and Christian councils, which new times evoke, until we have considered well whether they are truly expansions, in the light and heat of our century, of the sacred life-germ of the ancient faith and the ancient love.

And what lessons has this parable for the individual? Surely that of active present faith, not waiting for future gifts of light or feeling, but confident that the seed already sown, the seed of the word, has power to develop into the rich fruit of Christian character. In this respect the parable supplements the first one. From that we learned that if the soil were not in fault, if the heart were honest and good, the seed would fructify. From this we learn that these conditions suffice for a perfect harvest. The incessant, all-important help of God, we have seen, is not denied; it is taken for granted, as the atmospheric and magnetic influences upon the grain. So should we reverentially and thankfully rely upon the aid of God, and then, instead of waiting for strange visitations and special stirrings of grace, account that we already possess enough to make us responsible for the harvest of the soul. Multitudes of souls, whose true calling is, in obedient trust, to arise and walk, are at this moment

lying impotent beside some pool which they expect an angel to stir, and into which they fain would then be put by some one, they know not whom—multitudes of expectant, inert, inactive souls, who know not that the text they have most need to ponder is this: "the earth beareth fruit of itself." For want of this they are actually, day by day, receiving the grace of God in vain.

We learn also to be content with gradual progress. St. John did not blame the children and young men to whom he wrote, because they were not mature in wisdom and experience. St. Paul exhorts us to grow up in all things into Him which is the Head, even Christ. They do not ask for more than steady growth; and their Master, as He distrusted the fleeting joy of hearers whose hearts were shallow, now explicitly bids us not to be content with any first attainment, not to count all done if we are converted, but to develop first the blade, then the ear, and lastly the full corn in the ear.

Does it seem a tedious weary sentence? Are we discontent for want of conscious interferences of heaven? Do we complain that, to human consciousness, the great Sower sleeps and rises up and leaves the grain to fare He knows not how? It is only for a little while. When the fruit is ripe, He will Himself gather it into His eternal garner.

THE MUSTARD SEED.

"And He said, How shall we liken the kingdom of God? or in what parable shall we set it forth? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown upon the earth, though it be less than all the seeds that are upon the earth, yet when it is sown, groweth up, and becometh greater than all the herbs, and putteth out great branches; so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow thereof. And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it: and without a parable spake He not unto them: but privately to His own disciples He expounded all things."—MARK iv. 30–34 (R.V.).

ST. MARK has recorded one other parable of this great cycle. Jesus now invites the disciples to let their own minds play upon the subject. Each is to ask himself a question: How shall we liken the kingdom of God? or in what parable shall we set it forth?

A gentle pause, time for them to form some splendid and ambitious image in their minds, and then we can suppose with what surprise they heard His own answer, "It is like a grain of mustard seed." And truly some Christians of a later day might be astonished also, if they could call up a fair image of their own conceptions of the kingdom of God, and compare it with this figure, employed by Jesus.

But here one must observe a peculiarity in our Saviour's use of images. His illustrations of His first coming, and of His work of grace, which are many, are all of the homeliest kind. He is a shepherd who seeks one sheep. He is not an eagle that fluttereth over her young and beareth them on her pinions, but a hen who gathereth her chickens under her wings. Never once does He rise into that high and poetic strain with which His followers have loved to sing of the Star of Bethlehem, and which Isaiah lavished beforehand

upon the birth of the Prince of Peace. There is no language more intensely concentrated and glowing than He has employed to describe the judgment of the hypocrites who rejected Him, of Jerusalem, and of the world at last. But when He speaks of His first coming and its effects, it is not of that sunrise to which all kings and nations shall hasten, but of a little grain of mustard seed, which is to become "greater than all the herbs," and put forth great branches, "so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow of them." When one thinks of such an image for such an event, of the founding of the kingdom of God, and its advance to universal supremacy, represented by the small seed of a shrub which grows to the height of a tree, and even harbours birds, he is conscious almost of incongruity. But when one reconsiders it, he is filled with awe and reverence. For this exactly expresses the way of thinking natural to One who has stooped immeasurably down to the task which all others feel to be so lofty. There is a poem of Shelley, which expresses the relative greatness of three spirits by the less and less value which they set on the splendours of the material heavens. To the first they are a palace-roof of golden lights, to the second but the mind's first chamber, to the last only drops which Nature's mighty heart drives through thinnest veins. Now that which was to Isaiah the exalting of every valley and the bringing low of every mountain, and to Daniel the overthrow of a mighty image whose aspect was terrible, by a stone cut out without hands, was to Jesus but the sowing of a grain of mustard seed. Could any other have spoken thus of the founding of the kingdom of God? An enthusiast over-values his work, he can think of nothing else; and he expects

immediate revolutions. Jesus was keenly aware that His work in itself was very small, no more than the sowing of a seed, and even of the least, popularly speaking, among all seeds. Clearly He did not overrate the apparent effect of His work on earth. And indeed, what germ of religious teaching could be less promising than the doctrine of the cross, held by a few peasants in a despised province of a nation already subjugated and soon to be overwhelmed?

The image expresses more than the feeble beginning and victorious issue of His work, more than even the gradual and logical process by which this final triumph should be attained. All this we found in the preceding parable. But here the emphasis is laid on the development of Christ's influence in unexpected spheres. Unlike other herbs, the mustard in Eastern climates does grow into a tree, shoot out great branches from the main stem, and give shelter to the birds of the air. So has the Christian faith developed ever new collateral agencies, charitable, educational, and social: so have architecture, music, literature, flourished under its shade, and there is not one truly human interest which would not be deprived of its best shelter if the rod of Jesse were hewn down. Nay, we may urge that the Church itself has become the most potent force in directions not its own: it broke the chains of the negro; it asserts the rights of woman and of the poor; its noble literature is finding a response in the breast of a hundred degraded races; the herb has become a tree.

And so in the life of individuals, if the seed be allowed its due scope and place to grow, it gives shelter and blessing to whatsoever things are honest and lovely, not only if there be any virtue, but also if there be any praise.

Well is it with the nation, and well with the soul, when the faith of Jesus is not rigidly restricted to a prescribed sphere, when the leaves which are for the healing of the nations cast their shadow broad and cool over all the spaces in which all its birds of song are nestling.

A remarkable assertion is added. Although the parabolic mode of teaching was adopted in judgment, yet its severe effect was confined within the narrowest limits. His many parables were spoken "as they were able to hear," but only to His own disciples privately was all their meaning expounded.

FOUR MIRACLES.

"And there was a great calm."—MARK iv. 39 (R.V.).

"Behold, him that was possessed with devils, sitting, clothed and in his right mind, *even* him that had the legion."—v. 15 (R.V.).

"Who touched Me?"—v. 31 (R.V.).

"Talitha cumi."—v. 41 (R.V.).

THERE are two ways, equally useful, of studying Scripture, as there are of regarding the other book of God, the face of Nature. We may bend over a wild flower, or gaze across a landscape; and it will happen that a naturalist, pursuing a moth, loses sight of a mountain-range. It is a well-known proverb, that one may fail to see the wood for the trees, losing in details the general effect. And so the careful student of isolated texts may never perceive the force and cohesion of a connected passage.

The reader of a Gospel narrative thinks, that by pondering it as a whole, he secures himself against any such misfortune. But a narrative dislocated, often loses as much as a detached verse. The actions of our Lord are often exquisitely grouped, as becometh Him

Who hath made everything not beautiful only, but especially beautiful in its season. And we should not be content without combining the two ways of reading Scripture, the detailed and the rapid,—lingering at times to apprehend the marvellous force of a solitary verse, and again sweeping over a broad expanse, like a surveyor, who, to map a country, stretches his triangles from mountain peak to peak.

We have reached a point at which St. Mark records a special outshining of miraculous power. Four striking works follow each other without a break, and it must not for a moment be supposed that the narrative is thus constructed, certain intermediate discourses and events being sacrificed for the purpose, without a deliberate and a truthful intention. That intention is to represent the effect, intense and exalting, produced by such a cycle of wonders on the minds of His disciples. They saw them come close upon each other: we should lose the impression as we read, if other incidents were allowed to interpose themselves. It is one more example of St. Mark's desire to throw light, above all things, upon the energy and power of the sacred life.

We have to observe therefore the bearing of these four miracles on each other, and upon what precedes, before studying them one by one.

It was a time of trial. The Pharisees had decided that He had a devil. His relatives had said He was beside Himself. His manner of teaching had changed, because the people should see without perceiving, and hear without understanding. They who understood His parables heard much of seed that failed, of success a great way off, of a kingdom which would indeed be great at last, but for the present weak and small. And it is certain that there must have been heavy hearts

among those who left, with Him, the populous side of the lake, to cross over into remote and semi-pagan retirement. To encourage them, and as if in protest against His rejection by the authorities, Jesus enters upon this great cycle of miracles.

They find themselves, as the Church has often since been placed, and as every human soul has had to feel itself, far from shore, and tempest-beaten. The rage of human foes is not so deaf, so implacable, as that of wind and wave. It is the stress of adverse circumstances in the direst form. But Jesus proves Himself to be Master of the forces of nature which would overwhelm them.

Nay, they learn that His seeming indifference is no proof that they are neglected, by the rebuke He speaks to their over-importunate appeals, Why are ye so fearful? have ye not yet faith? And they, who might have been shaken by the infidelity of other men, fear exceedingly as they behold the obedience of the wind and the sea, and ask, Who then is this?

But in their mission as His disciples, a worse danger than the enmity of man or convulsions of nature awaits them. On landing, they are at once confronted by one whom an evil spirit has made exceeding fierce, so that no man could pass by that way. It is their way nevertheless, and they must tread it. And the demoniac adores, and the evil spirits themselves are abject in supplication, and at the word of Jesus are expelled. Even the inhabitants, who will not receive Him, are awe-struck and deprecatory, and if at their bidding Jesus turns away again, His followers may judge whether the habitual meekness of such a one is due to feebleness or to a noble self-command.

Landing once more, they are soon accosted by a

ruler of the synagogue, whom sorrow has purified from the prejudices of his class. And Jesus is about to heal the daughter of Jairus, when another form of need is brought to light. A slow and secret decline, wasting the vital powers, a silent woe, speechless, stealthily approaching the Healer—over this grief also He is Lord. And it is seen that neither the visible actions of Jesus nor the audible praises of His petitioners can measure the power that goes out of Him, the physical benefits which encompass the Teacher as a halo envelopes flame.

Circumstances, and the fiends of the pit, and the woes that waste the lives of men, over these He has been seen to triumph. But behind all that we strive with here, there lurks the last enemy, and he also shall be subdued. And now first an example is recorded of what we know to have already taken place, the conquest of death by his predicted Spoiler. Youth and gentle maidenhood, high hope and prosperous circumstances have been wasted, but the call of Jesus is heard by the ear that was stopped with dust, and the spirit obeys Him in the far off realm of the departed, and they who have just seen such other marvels, are nevertheless amazed with a great amazement.

No cycle of miracles could be more rounded, symmetrical and exhaustive; none could better vindicate to His disciples His impugned authority, or brace their endangered faith, or fit them for what almost immediately followed, their own commission, and the first journey upon which they too cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

THE TWO STORMS.

"And on that day, when even was come, He saith unto them, Let us go over unto the other side. And leaving the multitude, they take Him with them, even as He was, in the boat. And other boats were with Him. And there ariseth a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat was now filling. And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish? And He awoke, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"—MARK iv. 35–41 (R.V.).

"And when even was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land. And seeing them distressed in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them, about the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them, walking on the sea; and He would have passed by them: but they, when they saw Him walking on the sea, supposed that it was an apparition, and cried out: for they all saw Him, and were troubled. But He straightway spake with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And He went up unto them into the boat; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves. For they understood not concerning the loaves, but their hearts were hardened."—MARK vi. 47–52 (R.V.).

FEW readers are insensible to the wonderful power with which the Gospels tell the story of the two storms upon the lake. The narratives are favourites in every Sunday school; they form the basis of countless hymns and poems; and we always recur to them with fresh delight.

In the first account we see as in a picture the weariness of the great Teacher, when, the long day being over and the multitude dismissed, He retreats across the sea without preparation, and "as He was," and sinks to sleep on the one cushion in the stern, undisturbed by the raging tempest or by the waves which beat into the boat. We observe the reluctance

of the disciples to arouse Him until the peril is extreme, and the boat is "now" filling. We hear from St. Mark, the associate of St. Peter, the presumptuous and characteristic cry which expresses terror, and perhaps dread lest His tranquil slumbers may indicate a separation between His cause and theirs, who perish while He is unconcerned. We admire equally the calm and masterful words which quell the tempest, and those which enjoin a faith so lofty as to endure the last extremities of peril without dismay, without agitation in its prayers. We observe the strange incident, that no sooner does the storm cease than the waters, commonly seething for many hours afterwards, grow calm. And the picture is completed by the mention of their new dread (fear of the supernatural Man replacing their terror amid the convulsions of nature), and of their awestruck questioning among themselves.

In the second narrative we see the ship far out in the lake, but watched by One, Who is alone upon the land. Through the gloom He sees them "tormented" by fruitless rowing; but though this is the reason why He comes, He is about to pass them by. The watch of the night is remembered; it is the fourth. The cry of their alarm is universal, for they all saw Him and were troubled. We are told of the promptitude with which He thereupon relieved their fears; we see Him climb up into the boat, and the sudden ceasing of the storm, and their amazement. Nor is that after-thought omitted in which they blamed themselves for their astonishment. If their hearts had not been hardened, the miracle of the loaves would have taught them that Jesus was the master of the physical world.

Now all this picturesque detail belongs to a single Gospel. And it is exactly what a believer would

expect. How much soever the healing of disease might interest St. Luke the physician, who relates all such events so vividly, it would have impressed the patient himself yet more, and an account of it by him, if we had it, would be full of graphic touches. Now these two miracles were wrought for the rescue of the apostles themselves. The Twelve took the place held in others by the lame, the halt and the blind: the suspense, the appeal, and the joy of deliverance were all their own. It is therefore no wonder that we find their accounts of these especial miracles so picturesque. But this is a solid evidence of the truth of the narratives; for while the remembrance of such actual events should thrill with agitated life, there is no reason why a legend of the kind should be especially clear and vivid. The same argument might easily be carried farther. When the disciples began to reproach themselves for their unbelieving astonishment, they were naturally conscious of having failed to learn the lesson which had been taught them just before. Later students and moralists would have observed that another miracle, a little earlier, was a still closer precedent, but they naturally blamed themselves most for being blind to what was immediately before their eyes. Now when Jesus walked upon the waters and the disciples were amazed, it is not said that they forgot how He had already stilled a tempest, but they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened. In touches like this we find the influence of a by-stander beyond denial.

Every student of Scripture must have observed the special significance of those parables and miracles which recur a second time with certain designed variations. In the miraculous draughts of fishes, Christ

Himself avowed an allusion to the catching of men. And the Church has always discerned a spiritual intention in these two storms, in one of which Christ slept, while in the other His disciples toiled alone, and which express, between them, the whole strain exercised upon a devout spirit by adverse circumstances. Dangers never alarmed one who realized both the presence of Jesus and His vigilant care. Temptation enters only because this is veiled. Why do adversities press hard upon me, if indeed I belong to Christ? He must either be indifferent and sleeping, or else absent altogether from my frail and foundering bark. It is thus that we let go our confidence, and incur agonies of mental suffering, and the rebuke of our Master, even though He continues to be the Protector of His unworthy people.

On the voyage of life we may conceive of Jesus as our Companion, for He is with us always, or as watching us from the everlasting hills, whither it was expedient for us that He should go. Nevertheless, we are storm-tossed and in danger. Although we are His, and not separated from Him by any conscious disobedience, yet the conditions of life are unmitigated, the winds as wild, the waves as merciless, the boat as cruelly "tormented" as ever. And no rescue comes: Jesus is asleep: He cares not that we perish. Then we pray after a fashion so clamorous, and with supplication so like demands, that we too appear to have undertaken to awake our Lord. Then we have to learn from the first of these miracles, and especially from its delay. The disciples were safe, had they only known it, whether Jesus would have interposed of His own accord, or whether they might still have needed to appeal to Him, but in a gentler fashion. We may ask

help, provided that we do so in a serene and trustful spirit, anxious for nothing, not seeking to extort a concession, but approaching with boldness the throne of grace, on which our Father sits. It is thus that the peace of God shall rule our hearts and minds, for want of which the apostles were asked, Where is your faith? Comparing the narratives, we learn that Jesus reassured their hearts even before He arose, and then, having first silenced by His calmness the storm within them, He stood up and rebuked the storm around.

St. Augustine gave a false turn to the application, when he said, "If Jesus were not asleep within thee, thou wouldst be calm and at rest. But why is He asleep? Because thy faith is asleep," etc. (Sermon lxiii.) The sleep of Jesus was natural and right; and it answers not to our spiritual torpor, but to His apparent indifference and non-intervention in our time of distress. And the true lesson of the miracle is that we should trust Him Whose care fails not when it seems to fail, Who is able to save to the uttermost, and Whom we should approach in the direst peril without panic. It was fitly taught them first when all the powers of the State and the Church were leagued against Him, and He as a blind man saw not and as a dumb man opened not His mouth.

The second storm should have found them braver by the experience of the first; but spiritually as well as bodily they were farther removed from Christ. The people, profoundly moved by the murder of the Baptist, wished to set Jesus on the throne, and the disciples were too ambitious to be allowed to be present while He dismissed the multitudes. They had to be sent away, and it was from the distant hillside that Jesus saw their danger. Surely it is instructive, that neither the shades

of night, nor the abstracted fervour of His prayers, prevented him from seeing it, nor the stormlashed waters from bringing aid. And significant also, that the experience of remoteness, though not sinful, since He had sent them away, was yet the result of their own worldliness. It is when we are out of sympathy with Jesus that we are most likely to be alone in trouble. None was in their boat to save them, and in heart also they had gone out from the presence of their God. Therefore they failed to trust in His guidance Who had sent them into the ship: they had no sense of protection or of supervision; and it was a terrible moment when a form was vaguely seen to glide over the waves. Christ, it would seem, would have gone before and led them to the haven where they would be. Or perhaps He "would have passed by them," as He would afterwards have gone further than Emmaus, to elicit any trustful half-recognition which might call to Him and be rewarded. But they cried out for fear. And so it is continually with God in His world, men are terrified at the presence of the supernatural, because they fail to apprehend the abiding presence of the supernatural Christ. And yet there is one point at least in every life, the final moment, in which all else must recede, and the soul be left alone with the beings of another world. Then, and in every trial, and especially in all trials which press in upon us the consciousness of the spiritual universe, well is it for him who hears the voice of Jesus saying, It is I, be not afraid.

For only through Jesus, only in His person, has that unknown universe ceased to be dreadful and mysterious. Only when He is welcomed does the storm cease to rage around us.

It was the earlier of these miracles which first taught

the disciples that not only were human disorders under His control, and gifts and blessings at His disposal, but also the whole range of nature was subject to Him, and the winds and the sea obey Him.

Shall we say that His rebuke addressed to these was a mere figure of speech? Some have inferred that natural convulsions are so directly the work of evil angels that the words of Jesus were really spoken to them. But the plain assertion is that He rebuked the winds and the waves, and these would not become identical with Satan even upon the supposition that he excites them. We ourselves continually personify the course of nature, and even complain of it, wantonly enough, and Scripture does not deny itself the use of ordinary human forms of speech. Yet the very peculiar word employed by Jesus cannot be without significance. It is the same with which He had already confronted the violence of the demoniac in the synagogue, Be muzzled. At the least it expresses stern repression, and thus it reminds us that creation itself is made subject to vanity, the world deranged by sin, so that all around us requires readjustment as truly as all within, and Christ shall at last create a new earth as well as a new heaven.

Some pious people resign themselves much too passively to the mischiefs of the material universe, supposing that troubles which are not of their own making, must needs be a Divine infliction, calling only for submission. But God sends oppositions to be conquered as well as burdens to be borne ; and even before the fall the world had to be subdued. And our final mastery over the surrounding universe was expressed, when Jesus our Head rebuked the winds, and stilled the waves when they arose.

As they beheld, a new sense fell upon His disciples of a more awful presence than they had yet discerned. They asked not only what manner of man is this? but, with surmises which went out beyond the limits of human greatness, Who then is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?

CHAPTER V.

THE DEMONIAC OF GADARA.

"And they came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. And when He was come out of the boat, straightway there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling in the tombs: and no man could any more bind him, no, not with a chain; because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been rent asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: and no man had strength to tame him. And always, night and day, in the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out, and cutting himself with stones. And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped Him; and crying out with a loud voice, he saith, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God, torment me not. For He said unto him, Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man. And He asked him, What is thy name? And he saith unto Him, My name is Legion; for we are many. And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there on the mountain side a great herd of swine feeding. And they besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And He gave them leave. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered into the swine: and the herd rushed down the steep into the sea, *in number* about two thousand; and they were choked in the sea. And they that fed them fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they came to see what it was that had come to pass. And they come to Jesus, and behold him that was possessed with devils sitting, clothed and in his right mind, *even* him that had the legion: and they were afraid. And they that saw it declared unto them how it befell him that was possessed with devils, and concerning the swine. And they began to beseech Him to depart from their borders. And as He was entering into the boat, he that had been possessed with devils besought Him that he might be with Him. And He suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go to thy

house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and *how* He had mercy on thee. And he went his way, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him : and all men did marvel."—MARK v. 1–20 (R.V.).

FRESH from asserting His mastery over winds and waves, the Lord was met by a more terrible enemy, the rage of human nature enslaved and impelled by the cruelty of hell. The place where He landed was a theatre not unfit for the tragedy which it revealed. A mixed race was there, indifferent to religion, rearing great herds of swine, upon which the law looked askance, but the profits of which they held so dear that they would choose to banish a Divine ambassador, and one who had released them from an incessant peril, rather than be deprived of these. Now it has already been shown that the wretches possessed by devils were not of necessity stained with special guilt. Even children fell into this misery. But yet we should expect to find it most rampant in places where God was dishonoured, in Gerasa and in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And it is so. All misery is the consequence of sin, although individual misery does not measure individual guilt. And the places where the shadow of sin has fallen heaviest are always the haunts of direst wretchedness.

The first Gospel mentions two demoniacs, but one was doubtless so pre-eminently fierce, and possibly so zealous afterward in proclaiming his deliverance, that only St. Matthew learned the existence of another, upon whom also Satan had wrought, if not his worst, enough to show his hatred, and the woes he would fain bring upon humanity.

Among the few terrible glimpses given us of the mind of the fallen angels, one is most significant and

sinister. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, to what haunts does he turn? He has no sympathy with what is lovely or sublime: in search of rest he wanders through dry places, deserts of arid sand in which his misery may be soothed by congenial desolation. Thus the ruins of the mystic Babylon become an abode of devils. And thus the unclean spirit, when he mastered this demoniac, drove him to a foul and dreary abode among the tombs. One can picture the victim in some lucid moment, awakening to consciousness only to shudder in his dreadful home, and scared back again into that ferocity which is the child of terror.

> "Is it not very like,
> The horrible conceit of death and night,
> Together with the terror of the place
> . . . . . .
> Oh! if I wake, shall I not be distraught,
> Environéd with all these hideous fears?"
>
> *Romeo and Juliet*, iv. 3.

There was a time when he had been under restraint, but "now no man could any more bind him" even with iron upon feet and wrists. The ferocity of his cruel subjugator turned his own strength against himself, so that night and day his howling was heard, as he cut himself with stones, and his haunts in the tombs and in the mountains were as dangerous as the lair of a wild breast, which no man dared pass by. What strange impulse drove him thence to the feet of Jesus? Very dreadful is the picture of his conflicting tendencies; the fiend within him struggling against something still human and attracted by the Divine, so that he runs from afar, yet cries aloud, and worships yet disowns having anything to do with Him; and as if the fiend

had subverted the true personality, and become the very man, when ordered to come out he adjures Jesus to torment him not.

And here we observe the knowledge of Christ's rank possessed by the evil ones. Long before Peter won a special blessing for acknowledging the Son of the living God, the demoniac called Him by the very name which flesh and blood did not reveal to Cephas. For their chief had tested and discovered Him in the wilderness, saying twice with dread surmise, If Thou be the Son of God. It is also noteworthy that the phrase, the most High God, is the name of Jehovah among the non-Jewish races. It occurs in both Testaments in connection with Melchizedek the Canaanite. It is used throughout the Babylonian proclamations in the book of Daniel. Micah puts it into the lips of Balaam. And the damsel with a spirit of divination employed it in Philippi. Except once, in a Psalm which tells of the return of apostate Israel to the Most High God (lxxviii. 35), the epithet is used only in relation with the nations outside the covenant. Its occurrence here is probably a sign of the pagan influences by which Gadara was infected, and for which it was plagued. By the name of God then, whose Son He loudly confessed that Jesus was, the fiend within the man adjures Him to torment Him not. But Jesus had not asked to be acknowledged; He had bidden the devil to come out. And persons who substitute loud confessions and clamorous orthodoxies for obedience should remember that so did the fiend of Gadara. Jesus replied by asking, What is thy name? The question was not an idle one, but had a healing tendency. For the man was beside himself: it was part of his cure that he was found "in his right mind;" and meanwhile his very

consciousness was merged in that of the fiends who tortured him, so that his voice was their voice, and they returned a vaunting answer through His lips. Our Lord sought therefore both to calm His excitement and to remind him of himself, and of what he once had been before evil beings dethroned his will. These were not the man, but his enemies by whom he was "carried about," and "led captive at their will." And it is always sobering to think of "Myself," the lonely individual, apart from even those who most influence me, with a soul to lose or save. With this very question the Church Catechism begins its work of arousing and instructing the conscience of each child, separating him from his fellows in order to lead him on to the knowledge of the individualising grace of God.

It may be that the fiends within him dictated his reply, or that he himself, conscious of their tyranny, cried out in agony, We are many; a regiment like those of conquering Rome, drilled and armed to trample and destroy, a legion. This answer distinctly contravened what Christ had just implied, that he was one, an individual, and precious in his Maker's eyes. But there are men and women in every Christian land, whom it might startle to look within, and see how far their individuality is oppressed and overlaid by a legion of impulses, appetites, and conventionalities, which leave them nothing personal, nothing essential and characteristic, nothing that deserves a name. The demons, now conscious of the power which calls them forth, besought Him to leave them a refuge in that country. St. Luke throws light upon this petition, as well as their former complaint, when he tells us they feared to be sent to "the abyss" of their final retribution. And as we read of men who are haunted by a fearful looking

for of judgment and a fierceness of fire, so they had no hope of escape, except until "the time." For a little respite they prayed to be sent even into the swine, and Jesus gave them leave.

What a difference there is between the proud and heroic spirits whom Milton celebrated, and these malignant but miserable beings, haunting the sepulchres like ghosts, truculent and yet dastardly, as ready to supplicate as to rend, filled with dread of the appointed time and of the abyss, clinging to that outlying country as a congenial haunt, and devising for themselves a last asylum among the brutes. And yet they are equally far from the materialistic superstitions of that age and place; they are not amenable to fumigations or exorcisms, and they do not upset the furniture in rushing out. Many questions have been asked about the petition of the demons and our Lord's consent. But none of them need much distress the reverential enquirer, who remembers by what misty horizons all our knowledge is enclosed. Most absurd is the charge that Jesus acted indefensibly in destroying property. Is it then so clear that the owners did not deserve their loss through the nature of their investments? Was it merely as a man, or as the Son of the living God, that His consent was felt to be necessary? And was it any part of His mission to protect brutes from death?

The loss endured was no greater than when a crop is beaten down by hail, or a vineyard devastated by insects, and in these cases an agency beyond the control of man is sent or permitted by God, Who was in Christ.

A far harder question it is, How could devils enter into brute creatures? and again, Why did they desire to do so? But the first of these is only a subdivision of the vaster problem, at once inevitable and insoluble. How

does spirit in any of its forms animate matter, or even manipulate it? We know not by what strange link a thought contracts a sinew, and transmutes itself into words or deeds. And if we believe the dread and melancholy fact of the possession of a child by a fiend, what reason have we, beyond prejudice, for doubting the possession of swine? It must be observed also, that no such possession is proved by this narrative to be a common event, but the reverse. The notion is a last and wild expedient of despair, proposing to content itself with the uttermost abasement, if only the demons might still haunt the region where they had thriven so well. And the consent of Jesus does not commit Him to any judgment upon the merit or the possibility of the project. He leaves the experiment to prove itself, exactly as when Peter would walk upon the water; and a laconic "Go" in this case recalls the "Come" in that; an assent, without approval, to an attempt which was about to fail. Not in the world of brutes could they find shelter from the banishment they dreaded; for the whole herd, frantic and ungoverned, rushed headlong into the sea and was destroyed. The second victory of the series was thus completed. Jesus was Master over the evil spirits which afflict humanity, as well as over the fierceness of the elements which rise against us.

THE MEN OF GADARA.

"And they that fed them fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they came to see what it was that had come to pass, And they come to Jesus, and behold him that was possessed with devils sitting, clothed and in his right mind, *even* him that had the legion: and they were afraid. And they that saw it declared unto them how it befell him that was possessed with devils, and concerning the swine. And they began to beseech him to depart from their borders. And as He was entering into the boat, he that had been possessed with devils besought Him that he might be with Him. And He suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and *how* He had mercy on thee. And he went his way, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel."—MARK v. 14–20 (R.V.).

THE expulsion of the demons from the possessed, their entrance into the herd, and the destruction of the two thousand swine, were virtually one transaction, and must have impressed the swineherds in its totality. They saw on the one hand the restoration of a dangerous and raging madman, known to be actuated by evil spirits, the removal of a standing peril which had already made one tract of country impassable, and (if they considered such a thing at all) the calming of a human soul, and its advent within the reach of all sacred influences. On the other side what was there? The loss of two thousand swine; and the consciousness that the kingdom of God was come nigh unto them. This was always an alarming discovery. Isaiah said, Woe is me! when his eyes beheld God high and lifted up. And Peter said, Depart from me, when he learned by the miraculous draught of fish that the Lord was there. But Isaiah's concern was because he was a man of unclean lips, and Peter's was because he was a sinful man. Their alarm was that of an awakened

conscience, and therefore they became the heralds of Him Whom they feared. But these men were simply scared at what they instinctively felt to be dangerous; and so they took refuge in a crowd, that frequent resort of the frivolous and conscience-stricken, and told in the city what they had seen. And when the inhabitants came forth, a sight met them which might have won the sternest, the man sitting, clothed (a nice coincidence, since St. Mark had not mentioned that he "ware no clothes,") and in his right mind, even him that had the legion, as the narrative emphatically adds. And doubtless the much debated incident of the swine had greatly helped to reassure this afflicted soul; the demons were palpably gone, visibly enough they were overmastered. But the citizens, like the swineherds, were merely terrified, neither grateful nor sympathetic; uninspired with hope of pure teaching, of rescue from other influences of the evil one, or of any unearthly kingdom. Their formidable visitant was one to treat with all respect, but to remove with all speed, "and they began to beseech Him to depart from their borders." They began, for it did not require long entreaty; the gospel which was free to all was not to be forced upon any. But how much did they blindly fling away, who refused the presence of the meek and lowly Giver of rest unto souls; and chose to be denied, as strangers whom He never knew, in the day when every eye shall see Him.

With how sad a heart must Jesus have turned away. Yet one soul at least was won, for as He was entering into the boat, the man who owed all to Him prayed Him that he might be with Him. Why was the prayer refused? Doubtless it sprang chiefly from gratitude and love, thinking it hard to lose so soon the

wondrous benefactor, the Man at whose feet he had sat down, Who alone had looked with pitiful and helpful eyes on one whom others only sought to "tame." Such feelings are admirable, but they must be disciplined so as to seek, not their own indulgence, but their Master's real service. Now a reclaimed demoniac would have been a suspected companion for One who was accused of league with the Prince of the devils. There is no reason to suppose that he had any fitness whatever to enter the immediate circle of our Lord's intimate disciples. His special testimony would lose all its force when he left the district where he was known; but there, on the contrary, the miracle could not fail to be impressive, as its extent and permanence were seen. This man was perhaps the only missionary who could reckon upon a hearing from those who banished Jesus from their coasts. And Christ's loving and unresentful heart would give this testimony to them in its fulness. It should begin at his own house and among his friends, who would surely listen. They should be told how great things the Lord had done for him, and Jesus expressly added, how He had mercy upon thee, that so they might learn their mistake, who feared and shrank from such a kindly visitant. Here is a lesson for these modern days, when the conversion of any noted profligate is sure to be followed by attempts to push him into a vagrant publicity, not only full of peril in itself, but also removing him from the familiar sphere in which his consistent life would be more convincing than all sermons, and where no suspicion of self-interest could overcloud the brightness of his testimony.

Possibly there was yet another reason for leaving him in his home. He may have desired to remain close

to Jesus, lest, when the Saviour was absent, the evil spirits should resume their sway. In that case it would be necessary to exercise his faith and convince him that the words of Jesus were far-reaching and effectual, even when He was Himself remote. If so, he learned the lesson well, and became an evangelist through all the region of Decapolis. And where all did marvel, we may hope that some were won. What a revelation of mastery over the darkest and most dreadful forces of evil, and of respect for the human will (which Jesus never once coerced by miracle, even when it rejected Him), what unwearied care for the rebellious, and what a sense of sacredness in lowly duties, better for the demoniac than the physical nearness of his Lord, are combined in this astonishing narrative, which to invent in the second century would itself have required miraculous powers.

WITH JAIRUS.

"And when Jesus had crossed over again in the boat unto the other side, a great multitude was gathered unto Him: and He was by the sea. And there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jaïrus by name; and seeing Him, he falleth at His feet, and beseecheth Him much, saying, My little daughter is at the point of death: *I pray Thee* that Thou come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be made whole, and live. And He went with him; and a great multitude followed Him, and they thronged Him. And a woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, having heard the things concerning Jesus, came in the crowd behind, and touched His garment. For she said, If I touch but His garments, I shall be made whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her plague. And straightway Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power *proceeding* from Him had gone forth, turned Him about in the crowd, and said, Who touched My garments? And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee,

and sayest Thou, Who touched Me? And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what had been done to her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague. While He yet spake, they come from the ruler of the synagogue's *house*, saying, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? But Jesus not heeding the word spoken, saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Fear not, only believe. And He suffered no man to follow with Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And they come to the house of the ruler of the synagogue; and He beholdeth a tumult, and *many* weeping and wailing greatly. And when He was entered in, He saith unto them, Why make ye a tumult, and weep? the child is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn. But He, having put them all forth, taketh the father of the child and her mother and them that were with Him, and goeth in where the child was. And taking the child by the hand, He saith unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise. And straightway the damsel rose up, and walked; for she was twelve years old. And they were amazed straightway with a great amazement. And He charged them much that no man should know this; and He commanded that *something* should be given her to eat."—MARK v. 21–43 (R.V.).

REPULSED from Decapolis, but consoled by the rescue and zeal of the demoniac, Jesus returned to the western shore, and a great multitude assembled. The other boats which were with Him had doubtless spread the tidings of the preternatural calm which rescued them from deadly peril, and it may be that news of the event of Gadara arrived almost as soon as He Whom they celebrated. We have seen that St. Mark aims at bringing the four great miracles of this period into the closest sequence. And so he passes over a certain brief period with the words "He was by the sea." But in fact Jesus was reasoning with the Pharisees, and with the disciples of John, who had assailed Him and His followers, when one of their natural leaders threw himself at His feet.

The contrast is sharp enough, as He rises from a feast to go to the house of mourning, from eating with publicans and sinners to accompany a ruler of the synagogue. These unexpected calls, these sudden alternations all found Him equally ready to bear the same noble part, in the most dissimilar scenes, and in treating temperaments the most unlike. But the contrast should also be observed between those harsh and hostile critics who hated Him in the interests of dogma and of ceremonial, and Jairus, whose views were theirs, but whose heart was softened by trouble. The danger of his child was what drove him, perhaps reluctantly enough, to beseech Jesus much. And nothing could be more touching than his prayer for his "little daughter," its sequence broken as if with a sob; wistfully pictorial as to the process, "that Thou come and lay Thy hands upon her," and dilating wistfully too upon the effect, "that she may be made whole and live." If a miracle were not in question, the dullest critic in Europe would confess that this exquisite supplication was not composed by an evangelist, but a father. And he would understand also why the very words in their native dialect were not forgotten, which men had heard awake the dead.

As Jesus went with him, a great multitude followed Him, and they thronged Him. It is quite evident that Jesus did not love these gatherings of the idly curious. Partly from such movements He had withdrawn Himself to Gadara; and partly to avoid exciting them He strove to keep many of His miracles a secret. Sensationalism is neither grace nor a means of grace. And it must be considered that the perfect Man, as far from mental apathy or physical insensibility as from morbid fastidiousness, would find much to shrink away from in

the pressure of a city crowd. The contact of inferior organizations, selfishness driving back the weak and gentle, vulgar scrutiny and audible comment, and the desire for some miracle as an idle show, which He would only work because His gentle heart was full of pity, all these would be utterly distressing to Him who was

"The first true gentleman that ever breathed,"

as well as the revelation of God in flesh. It is therefore noteworthy that we have many examples of His grace and goodness amid such trying scenes, as when He spoke to Zacchæus, and called Bartimæus to Him to be healed. Jesus could be wrathful but He was never irritated. Of these examples one of the most beautiful is here recorded, for as He went with Jairus, amidst the rude and violent thronging of the crowds, moving alone (as men often are in sympathy and in heart alone amid seething thoroughfares), He suddenly became aware of a touch, the timid and stealthy touch of a broken-hearted woman, pale and wasted with disease, but borne through the crowd by the last effort of despair and the first energy of a newborn hope. She ought not to have come thither, since her touch spread ceremonial uncleanness far and wide. Nor ought she to have stolen a blessing instead of praying for it. And if we seek to blame her still further, we may condemn the superstitious notion that Christ's gifts of healing were not conscious and loving actions, but a mere contagion of health, by which one might profit unfelt and undiscovered. It is urged indeed that hers was not a faith thus clouded, but so majestic as to believe that Christ would know and respond to the silent hint of a gentle touch. And is it supposed that Jesus would have dragged into publicity such a perfect lily of the vale as this? and what means

her trembling confession, and the discovery that she could not be hid? But when our keener intellects have criticised her errors, and our clearer ethics have frowned upon her misconduct, one fact remains. She is the only woman upon whom Jesus is recorded to have bestowed any epithet but a formal one. Her misery and her faith drew from His guarded lips, the tender and yet lofty word Daughter.

So much better is the faith which seeks for blessing, however erroneous be its means, than the heartless propriety which criticises with most dispassionate clearness, chiefly because it really seeks nothing for itself at all. Such faith is always an appeal, and is responded to, not as she supposed, mechanically, unconsciously, nor, of course, by the *opus operatum* of a garment touched (or of a sacrament formally received), but by the going forth of power from a conscious Giver, in response to the need which has approached His fulness. He knew her secret and fearful approach to Him, as He knew the guileless heart of Nathanael, whom He marked beneath the fig-tree. And He dealt with her very gently. Doubtless there are many such concealed woes, secret, untold miseries which eat deep into gentle hearts, and are never spoken, and cannot, like Bartimæus, cry aloud for public pity. For these also there is balm in Gilead, and if the Lord requires them to confess Him publicly, He will first give them due strength to do so. This enfeebled and emaciated woman was allowed to feel in her body that she was healed of her plague, before she was called upon for her confession. Jesus asked, Who touched my clothes? It was one thing to press Him, driven forward by the multitude around, as circumstances impel so many to become churchgoers, readers of Scripture, interested in

sacred questions and controversies until they are borne as by physical propulsion into the closest contact with our Lord, but not drawn thither by any personal craving or sense of want, nor expecting any blessed reaction of "the power proceeding from Him." It was another thing to reach out a timid hand and touch appealingly even that tasselled fringe of His garment which had a religious significance, whence perhaps she drew a semi-superstitious hope. In the face of this incident, can any orthodoxy forbid us to believe that the grace of Christ extends, now as of yore, to many a superstitious and erring approach by which souls reach after Christ?

The disciples wondered at His question: they knew not that "the flesh presses but faith touches;" but as He continued to look around and seek her that had done this thing, she fell down and told Him all the truth. Fearing and trembling she spoke, for indeed she had been presumptuous, and ventured without permission. But the chief thing was that she had ventured, and so He graciously replied, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace and be whole of thy plague. Thus she received more than she had asked or thought; not only healing for the body, but also a victory over that self-effacing, fearful, half morbid diffidence, which long and weakening disease entails. Thus also, instead of a secret cure, she was given the open benediction of her Lord, and such confirmation in her privilege as many more would enjoy if only with their mouth confession were made unto salvation.

While He yet spoke, and the heart of Jairus was divided between joy at a new evidence of the power of Christ, and impatience at every moment of delay, not knowing that his Benefactor was the Lord of time

itself, the fatal message came, tinged with some little irony as it asked, Why troublest thou the Teacher any more? It is quite certain that Jesus had before now raised the dead, but no miracle of the kind had acquired such prominence as afterwards to claim a place in the Gospel narratives.

One is led to suspect that the care of Jesus had prevailed, and they had not been widely published. To those who brought this message, perhaps no such case had travelled, certainly none had gained their credence. It was in their eyes a thing incredible that He should raise the dead, and indeed there is a wide difference between every other miracle and this. We struggle against all else, but when death comes we feel that all is over except to bury out of our sight what once was beautiful and dear. Death is destiny made visible; it is the irrevocable. Who shall unsay the words of a bleeding heart, I shall go to him but he shall not return to me? But Christ came to destroy him that had the power of death. Even now, through Him, we are partakers of a more intense and deeper life, and have not only the hope but the beginning of immortality. And it was the natural seal upon His lofty mission, that He should publicly raise up the dead. For so great a task, shall we say that Jesus now gathers all His energies? That would be woefully to misread the story; for a grand simplicity, the easy bearing of unstrained and amply adequate resources, is common to all the narratives of life brought back. We shall hereafter see good reason why Jesus employed means for other miracles, and even advanced by stages in the work. But lest we should suppose that effort was necessary, and His power but just sufficed to overcome the resistance, none of these supreme miracles

is wrought with the slightest effort. Prophets and apostles may need to stretch themselves upon the bed or to embrace the corpse; Jesus, in His own noble phrase, awakes it out of sleep. A wonderful ease and quietness pervade the narratives, expressing exactly the serene bearing of the Lord of the dead and of the living. There is no holding back, no toying with the sorrow of the bereaved, such as even Euripides, the tenderest of the Greeks, ascribed to the demigod who tore from the grip of death the heroic wife of Admetus. Hercules plays with the husband's sorrow, suggests the consolation of a new bridal, and extorts the angry cry, "Silence, what have you said? I would not have believed it of you." But what is natural to a hero, flushed with victory and the sense of patronage, would have ill become the absolute self-possession and gentle grace of Jesus. In every case, therefore, He is full of encouragement and sympathy, even before His work is wrought. To the widow of Nain He says, "Weep not." He tells the sister of Lazarus, "If thou wilt believe, thou shalt see the salvation of God." And when these disastrous tidings shake all the faith of Jairus, Jesus loses not a moment in reassuring Him: "Fear not, only believe," He says, not heeding the word spoken; that is to say, Himself unagitated and serene.*

In every case some co-operation was expected from the bystanders. The bearers of the widow's son halted, expectant, when this majestic and tender Wayfarer touched the bier. The friends of Lazarus rolled away the stone from the sepulchre. But the professional mourners in the house of Jairus were callous and insensible, and

* Unless indeed the meaning be rather, "*over* hearing the word," which is not its force in the New Testament (Matt. xviii. 17, twice).

when He interrupted their clamorous wailing, with the question, Why make ye tumult and weep? they laughed Him to scorn; a fit expression of the world's purblind incredulity, its reliance upon ordinary "experience" to disprove all possibilities of the extraordinary and Divine, and its heartless transition from conventional sorrow to ghastly laughter, mocking in the presence of death —which is, in its view, so desperate—the last hope of humanity. Laughter is not the fitting mood in which to contradict the Christian hope, that our lost ones are not dead, but sleep. The new and strange hope for humanity which Jesus thus asserted, He went on to prove, but not for them. Exerting that moral ascendency, which sufficed Him twice to cleanse the Temple, He put them all forth, as already He had shut out the crowd, and all His disciples but "the elect of His election," the three who now first obtain a special privilege. The scene was one of surpassing solemnity and awe; but not more so than that of Nain, or by the tomb of Lazarus. Why then were not only the idly curious and the scornful, but nine of His chosen ones excluded? Surely we may believe, for the sake of the little girl, whose tender grace of unconscious maidenhood should not, in its hour of reawakened vitality, be the centre of a gazing circle. He kept with Him the deeply reverential and the loving, the ripest apostles and the parents of the child, since love and reverence are ever the conditions of real insight. And then, first, was exhibited the gentle and profound regard of Christ for children. He did not arouse her, as others, with a call only, but took her by the hand, while He spoke to her those Aramaic words, so marvellous in their effect, which St. Peter did not fail to repeat to St. Mark as he had heard them, Talitha cumi; Damsel, I say unto thee,

Arise. They have an added sweetness when we reflect that the former word, though applied to a very young child, is in its root a variation of the word for a little lamb. How exquisite from the lips of the Good Shepherd, Who gave His life for the sheep. How strange to be thus awakened from the mysterious sleep, and to gaze with a child's fresh eyes into the loving eyes of Jesus. Let us seek to realise such positions, to comprehend the marvellous heart which they reveal to us, and we shall derive more love and trust from the effort than from all such doctrinal inference and allegorizing as would dry up, into a *hortus siccus*, the sweetest blooms of the sweetest story ever told.

So shall we understand what happened next in all three cases. Something preternatural and therefore dreadful, appeared to hang about the lives so wondrously restored. The widow of Nain did not dare to embrace her son until Christ "gave him to his mother." The bystanders did not touch Lazarus, bound hand and foot, until Jesus bade them "loose him and let him go." And the five who stood about this child's bed, amazed straightway with a great amazement, had to be reminded that being now in perfect health, after an illness which left her system wholly unsupplied, something should be given her to eat. This is the point at which Euripides could find nothing fitter for Hercules to utter than the awkward boast, "Thou wilt some day say that the son of Jove was a capital guest to entertain." What a contrast. For Jesus was utterly unflushed, undazzled, apparently unconscious of anything to disturb His composure. And so far was He from the unhappy modern notion, that every act of grace must be proclaimed on the housetop, and every recipient of grace however young, however unmatured, paraded and ex-

hibited, that He charged them much that no man should know this.

The story throughout is graphic and full of character, every touch, every word reveals the Divine Man; and only reluctance to believe a miracle prevents it from proving itself to every candid mind. Whether it be accepted or rejected, it is itself miraculous. It could not have grown up in the soil which generated the early myths and legends, by the working of the ordinary laws of mind. It is beyond their power to invent or to dream, supernatural in the strictest sense.

This miracle completes the cycle. Nature, distracted by the Fall, has revolted against Him in vain. Satan, intrenched in his last stronghold, has resisted, and humbled himself to entreaties and to desperate contrivances, in vain. Secret and unspoken woes, and silent germs of belief, have hidden from Him in vain. Death itself has closed its bony fingers upon its prey, in vain. Nothing can resist the power and love, which are enlisted on behalf of all who put their trust in Jesus.

CHAPTER VI.

REJECTED IN HIS OWN COUNTRY.

"And He went out from thence; and He cometh into His own country; and His disciples follow Him."—MARK vi. 1–6 (R.V.).

WE have seen how St. Mark, to bring out more vividly the connection between four mighty signs, their ideal completeness as a whole, and that mastery over nature and the spiritual world which they reveal, grouped them resolutely together, excluding even significant incidents which would break in upon their sequence. Bearing this in mind, how profoundly instructive it is that our Evangelist shows us this Master over storm and demons, over too-silent disease, and over death, too clamorously bewailed, in the next place teaching His own countrymen in vain, and an offence to them. How startling to read, at this juncture, when legend would surely have thrown all men prostrate at his feet, of His homely family and His trade, and how He Who rebuked the storm "could there do no mighty work."

First of all, it is touching to see Jesus turning once more to "His own country," just at this crisis. They had rejected Him in a frenzy of rage, at the outset of His ministry. And He had very lately repulsed the rude attempt of His immediate relatives to interrupt His mission. But now His heart leads Him thither, once again to appeal to the companions of His youth,

with the halo of His recent and surpassing works upon His forehead. He does not abruptly interrupt their vocations, but waits as before for the Sabbath, and the hushed assembly in the sacred place. And as He teaches in the synagogue, they are conscious of His power. Whence could He have these things? His wisdom was an equal wonder with His mighty works, of the reality of which they could not doubt. And what excuse then had they for listening to His wisdom in vain? But they went on to ask, Is not this the carpenter? the Son of Mary? they knew His brothers, and His sisters were living among them. And they were offended in Him, naturally enough. It *is* hard to believe in the supremacy of one, whom circumstances marked as our equal, and to admit the chieftainship of one who started side by side with us. In Palestine it was not disgraceful to be a tradesman, but yet they could fairly claim equality with "the carpenter." And it is plain enough that they found no impressive or significant difference from their neighbours in the "sisters" of Jesus, nor even in her whom all generations call blessed. Why then should they abase themselves before the claims of Jesus?

It is an instructive incident. First of all, it shows us the perfection of our Lord's abasement. He was not only a carpenter's son, but what this passage only declares to us explicitly, He wrought as an artizan, and consecrated for ever a lowly trade, by the toil of those holy limbs whose sufferings should redeem the world.

And we learn the abject folly of judging by mere worldly standards. We are bound to give due honour and precedence to rank and station. Refusing to do this, we virtually undertake to dissolve society, and readjust it upon other principles, or by instincts and

intuitions of our own, a grave task, when it is realized. But we are not to be dazzled, much less to be misled, by the advantages of station or of birth. Yet if, as it would seem, Nazareth rejected Christ because He was not a person of quality, this is only the most extreme and ironical exhibition of what happens every day, when a noble character, self-denying, self-controlled and wise, fails to win the respect which is freely and gladly granted to vice and folly in a coronet.

And yet, to one who reflected, the very objection they put forward was an evidence of His mission. His wisdom was confessed, and His miracles were not denied; were they less wonderful or more amazing, more supernatural, as the endowments of the carpenter whom they knew? Whence, they asked, had He derived His learning, as if it were not more noble for being original.

Are we sure that men do not still make the same mistake? The perfect and lowly humanity of Jesus is a stumbling block to some who will freely admit His ideal perfections, and the matchless nobility of His moral teaching. They will grant anything but the supernatural origin of Him to Whom they attribute qualities beyond parallel. But whence had He those qualities? What is there in the Galilee of the first century which prepares one for discovering there and then the revolutionizer of the virtues of the world, the most original, profound, and unique of all teachers, Him Whose example is still mightier than His precepts, and only not more perfect, because these also are without a flaw, Him Whom even unbelief would shrink from saluting by so cold a title as that of the most saintly of the saints. To ask with a clear scrutiny, whence the teaching of Jesus came, to realize the isolation from all

centres of thought and movement, of this Hebrew, this provincial among Hebrews, this villager in Galilee, this carpenter in a village, and then to observe His mighty works in every quarter of the globe, is enough to satisfy all candid minds that His earthly circumstances have something totally unlike themselves behind them. And the more men give ear to materialism and to materialistic evolution without an evolving mind, so much the more does the problem press upon them, Whence hath this man this wisdom? and what mean these mighty works?

From our Lord's own commentary upon their rejection we learn to beware of the vulgarising effects of familiarity. They had seen His holy youth, against which no slander was ever breathed. And yet, while His teaching astonished them, He had no honour in his own house. It is the same result which so often seems to follow from a lifelong familiarity with Scripture and the means of grace. We read, almost mechanically, what melts and amazes the pagan to whom it is a new word. We forsake, or submit to the dull routine of, ordinances the most sacred, the most searching, the most invigorating and the most picturesque.

And yet we wonder that the men of Nazareth could not discern the divinity of "the carpenter," whose family lived quiet and unassuming lives in their own village.

It is St. Mark, the historian of the energies of Christ, who tells us that He "could there do no mighty work," with only sufficient exception to prove that neither physical power nor compassion was what failed Him, since "He laid His hands upon a few sick folk and healed them." What then is conveyed by this bold phrase? Surely the fearful power of the human will to resist the will of man's compassionate Redeemer

He would have gathered Jerusalem under His wing, but she would not; and the temporal results of her disobedience had to follow; siege, massacre and ruin. God has no pleasure in the death of him who dieth, yet death follows, as the inevitable wages of sin. Therefore, as surely as the miracles of Jesus typified His gracious purposes for the souls of men, Who forgiveth all our iniquities, Who healeth all our diseases, so surely the rejection and defeat of those loving purposes paralysed the arm stretched out to heal their sick.

Does it seem as if the words "He could not," even thus explained, convey a certain affront, throw a shadow upon the glory of our Master? And the words "they mocked, scourged, crucified Him," do these convey no affront? The suffering of Jesus was not only physical: His heart was wounded; His overtures were rejected; His hands were stretched out in vain; His pity and love were crucified.

But now let this be considered, that men who refuse His Spirit continually presume upon His mercy, and expect not to suffer the penalty of their evil deeds. Alas, that is impossible. Where unbelief rejected His teaching, He "could not" work the marvels of His grace. How shall they escape who reject so great salvation?

THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE.

"And He called unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and He gave them authority over the unclean spirits; and He charged them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only; no bread, no wallet, no money in their purse; but *to go* shod with sandals: and, *said He*, put not on two coats. And He said unto them, Wheresoever ye enter into a house, there abide till ye depart thence. And whatsoever place shall not receive you, and they hear you not, as ye go forth thence, shake off the dust that is under your feet for a testimony unto them. And they went out, and preached that *men* should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them."—MARK vi. 7–13 (R.V.).

REPULSED a second time from the cradle of His youth, even as lately from Decapolis, with what a heavy heart must the Loving One have turned away. Yet we read of no abatement of His labours. He did not, like the fiery prophet, wander into the desert and make request that He might die. And it helps us to realise the elevation of our Lord, when we reflect how utterly the discouragement with which we sympathise in the great Elijah would ruin our conception of Jesus.

It was now that He set on foot new efforts, and advanced in the training of His elect. For Himself, He went about the villages, whither slander and prejudice had not yet penetrated, and was content to break new ground among the most untaught and sequestered of the people. The humblest field of labour was not too lowly for the Lord, although we meet, every day, with men who are "thrown away" and "buried" in obscure fields of usefulness. We have not yet learned to follow without a murmur the Carpenter, and the Teacher in villages, even though we are soothed in grief by thinking, because we endure the inevitable, that we are followers of the Man of Sorrows.

At the same moment when democracies and priesthoods are rejecting their Lord, a king had destroyed His forerunner. On every account it was necessary to vary as well as multiply the means for the evangelisation of the country. Thus the movement would be accelerated, and it would no longer present one solitary point of attack to its unscrupulous foes.

Jesus therefore called to Him the Twelve, and began to send them forth. In so doing, His directions revealed at once His wisdom and His fears for them.

Not even for unfallen man was it good to be alone. It was a bitter ingredient in the cup which Christ Himself drank, that His followers should be scattered to their own and leave Him alone. And it was at the last extremity, when he could no longer forbear, that St. Paul thought it good to be at Athens alone. Jesus therefore would not send His inexperienced heralds forth for the first time except by two and two, that each might sustain the courage and wisdom of his comrade. And His example was not forgotten. Peter and John together visited the converts in Samaria. And when Paul and Barnabas, whose first journey was together, could no longer agree, each of them took a new comrade end departed. Perhaps our modern missionaries lose more in energy than is gained in area by neglecting so humane a precedent, and forfeiting the special presence vouchsafed to the common worship of two or three.

St. Mark has not recorded the mission of the seventy evangelists, but this narrative is clearly coloured by his knowledge of that event. Thus He does not mention the gift of miraculous power, which was common to both, but He does tell of the authority over unclean spirits, which was explicitly given to the Twelve, and which the Seventy, returning with joy,

related that they also had successfully dared to claim. In conferring such power upon His disciples, Jesus took the first step towards that marvellous identification of Himself and His mastery over evil, with all His followers, that giving of His presence to their assemblies, His honour to their keeping, His victory to their experience, and His lifeblood to their veins, which makes Him the second Adam, represented in all the new-born race, and which finds its most vivid and blessed expression in the sacrament where His flesh is meat indeed and His blood is drink indeed. Now first He is seen to commit His powers and His honour into mortal hands.

In doing this, He impressed on them the fact that they were not sent at first upon a toilsome and protracted journey. Their personal connection with Him was not broken but suspended for a little while. Hereafter, they would need to prepare for hardship, and he that had two coats should take them. It was not so now: sandals would suffice their feet; they should carry no wallet; only a staff was needed for their brief excursion through a hospitable land. But hospitality itself would have its dangers for them, and when warmly received they might be tempted to be fêted by various hosts, enjoying the first enthusiastic welcome of each, and refusing to share afterwards the homely domestic life which would succeed. Yet it was when they ceased to be strangers that their influence would really be strongest; and so there was good reason, both for the sake of the family they might win, and for themselves who should not become self-indulgent, why they should not go from house to house.

These directions were not meant to become universal

rules, and we have seen how Jesus afterwards explicitly varied them. But their spirit is an admonition to all who are tempted to forget their mission in personal advantages which it may offer. Thus commissioned and endowed, they should feel as they went the greatness of the message they conveyed. Wherever they were rejected, no false meekness should forbid their indignant protest, and they should refuse to carry even the dust of that evil and doomed place upon their feet.

And they went forth and preached repentance, casting out many devils, and healing many that were sick. In doing this, they anointed them with oil, as St. James afterwards directed, but as Jesus never did. He used no means, or when faith needed to be helped by a visible application, it was always the touch of His own hand or the moisture of His own lip. The distinction is significant. And also it must be remembered that oil was never used by disciples for the edification of the dying, but for the recovery of the sick.

By this new agency the name of Jesus was more than ever spread abroad, until it reached the ears of a murderous tyrant, and stirred in his bosom not the repentance which they preached, but the horrors of ineffectual remorse.

HEROD.

"And king Herod heard *thereof;* for His name had become known: and he said, John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore do these powers work in him. But others said, It is Elijah. And others said, *It is* a prophet, *even* as one of the prophets. But Herod, when he heard *thereof*, said, John, whom I beheaded, he is risen. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. And Herodias set herself against him, and

desired to kill him; and she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous man and a holy, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was much perplexed; and he heard him gladly. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, and the high captains, and the chief men of Galilee; and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and them that sat at meat with him; and the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went out, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou forthwith give me in a charger the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; but for the sake of his oaths, and of them that sat at meat, he would not reject her. And straightway the king sent forth a soldier of his guard, and commanded to bring his head: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard *thereof*, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb."—MARK vi. 14–29 (R.V.).

THE growing influence of Jesus demanded the mission of the Twelve, and this in its turn increased His fame until it alarmed the tetrarch Herod. An Idumæan ruler of Israel was forced to dread every religious movement, for all the waves of Hebrew fanaticism beat against the foreign throne. And Herod Antipas was especially the creature of circumstances, a weak and plastic man. He is the Ahab of the New Testament, and it is a curious coincidence that he should have to do with its Elijah. As Ahab fasted when he heard his doom, and postponed the evil by his submission, so Herod was impressed and agitated by the teaching of the Baptist. But Ahab surrendered his soul to the imperious Jezebel, and Herod was ruined by Herodias. Each is the sport of strong influences from without, and warns us that a man, no more than a ship, can hope by drifting to come safe to haven.

No contrast could be imagined more dramatic than between the sleek seducer of his brother's wife and the imperious reformer, rude in garment and frugal of fare, thundering against the generation of vipers who were the chiefs of his religion.

How were these two brought together? Did the Baptist stride unsummoned into the court? Did his crafty foemen contrive his ruin by inciting the Tetrarch to consult him? Or did that restless religious curiosity, which afterwards desired to see Jesus, lead Herod to consult his forerunner? The abrupt words of John are not unlike an answer to some feeble question of casuistry, some plea of extenuating circumstances such as all can urge in mitigation of their worst deeds. He simply and boldly states the inflexible ordinance of God: It is not lawful for thee to have her.

What follows may teach us much.

1. It warns us that good inclinations, veneration for holiness in others, and ineffectual struggles against our own vices, do not guarantee salvation. He who feels them is not God-forsaken, since every such emotion is a grace. But he must not infer that he never may be forsaken, or that because he is not wholly indifferent or disobedient, God will some day make him all that his better moods desire. Such a man should be warned by Herod Antipas. Ruggedly and abruptly rebuked, his soul recognised and did homage to the truthfulness of his teacher. Admiration replaced the anger in which he cast him into prison. As he stood between him and the relentless Herodias, and "kept him safely," he perhaps believed that the gloomy dungeon, and the utter interruption of a great career, were only for the Baptist's preservation. Alas, there was another cause. He was "much perplexed": he dared not provoke his

temptress by releasing the man of God. And thus temporizing, and daily weakening the voice of conscience by disobedience, he was lost.

2. It is distinctly a bad omen that he "heard him gladly," since he had no claim to well-founded religious happiness. Our Lord had already observed the shallowness of men who immediately with joy receive the word, yet have no root. But this guilty man, disquieted by the reproaches of memory and the demands of conscience, found it a relief to hear stern truth, and to see from far the beauteous light of righteousness. He would not reform his life, but he would fain keep his sensibilities alive. It was so that Italian brigands used to maintain a priest. And it is so that fraudulent British tradesmen too frequently pass for religious men. People cry shame on their hypocrisy. Yet perhaps they less often wear a mask to deceive others than a cloke to keep their own hearts warm, and should not be quoted to prove that religion is a deceit, but as witnesses that even the most worldly soul craves as much of it as he can assimilate. So it was with Herod Antipas.

3. But no man can serve two masters. He who refuses the command of God to choose whom he will serve, in calmness and meditation, when the means of grace and the guidance of the Spirit are with him, shall hear some day the voice of the Tempter, derisive and triumphant, amid evil companions, when flushed with guilty excitements and with sensual desires, and deeply committed by rash words and "honour rooted in dishonour," bidding him choose now, and choose finally. Salome will tolerate neither weak hesitation nor half measures; she must herself possess "forthwith" the head of her mother's foe, which is worth more than half the kingdom,

since his influence might rob them of it all. And the king was exceeding sorry, but chose to be a murderer rather than be taken for a perjurer by the bad companions who sat with him. What a picture of a craven soul, enslaved even in the purple. And of the meshes for his own feet which that man weaves, who gathers around him such friends that their influence will surely mislead his lonely soul in its future struggles to be virtuous. What a lurid light does this passage throw upon another and a worse scene, when we meet Herod again, not without the tyrannous influence of his men of war.

4. We learn the mysterious interconnection of sin with sin. Vicious luxury and self-indulgence, the plastic feebleness of character which half yields to John, yet cannot break with Herodias altogether, these do not seem likely to end in murder. They have scarcely strength enough, we feel, for a great crime. Alas, they have feebleness enough for it, for he who joins in the dance of the graces may give his hand to the furies unawares. Nothing formidable is to be seen in Herod, up to the fatal moment when revelry, and the influence of his associates, and the graceful dancing of a woman whose beauty was pitiless, urged him irresistibly forward to bathe his shrinking hands in blood. And from this time forward he is a lost man. When a greater than John is reported to be working miracles, he has a wild explanation for the new portent, and his agitation is betrayed in his broken words, "John, whom I beheaded, he is risen." "For" St. Mark adds with quiet but grave significance, "Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him." Others might speak of a mere teacher, but the conscience of Herod will not suffer it to be so; it is his victim; he has learnt

the secret of eternity; "and therefore do these powers work in him." Yet Herod was a Sadducee.

5. These words are dramatic enough to prove themselves; it would have tasked Shakespere to invent them. But they involve the ascription from the first of unearthly powers to Jesus, and they disprove, what sceptics would fain persuade us, that miracles were inevitably ascribed, by the credulity of the age, to all great teachers, since John wrought none, and the astonishing theory that he had graduated in another world, was invented by Herod to account for those of Jesus. How inevitable it was that such a man should set at nought our Lord. Dread, and moral repulsion, and the suspicion that he himself was the mark against which all the powers of the avenger would be directed, these would not produce a mood in which to comprehend One who did not strive nor cry. To them it was a supreme relief to be able to despise Christ.

Elsewhere we can trace the gradual cessation of the alarm of Herod. At first he dreads the presence of the new Teacher, and yet dares not assail Him openly. And so, when Jesus was advised to go thence or Herod would kill Him, He at once knew who had instigated the crafty monition, and sent back his defiance to that fox. But even fear quickly dies in a callous heart, and only curiosity survives. Herod is soon glad to see Jesus, and hopes that He may work a miracle. For religious curiosity and the love of spiritual excitement often survive grace, just as the love of stimulants survives the healthy appetite for bread. But our Lord, Who explained so much for Pilate, spoke not a word to him. And the wretch, whom once the forerunner had all but won, now set the Christ Himself at nought, and mocked Him. So yet does the God of this world blind

the eyes of the unbelieving. So great are still the dangers of hesitation, since not to be for Christ is to be against Him.

6. But the blood of the martyr was not shed before his work was done. As the falling blossom admits the sunshine to the fruit, so the herald died when his influence might have clashed with the growing influence of his Lord, Whom the Twelve were at last trained to proclaim far and wide. At a stroke, his best followers were naturally transferred to Jesus, Whose way he had prepared. Rightly, therefore, has St. Mark placed the narrative at this juncture, and very significantly does St. Matthew relate that his disciples, when they had buried him, "came and told Jesus."

Upon the path of our Lord Himself this violent death fell as a heavy shadow. Nor was He unconscious of its menace, for after the transfiguration He distinctly connected with a prediction of His own death, the fact that they had done to Elias also whatsoever they listed. Such connections of thought help us to realise the truth, that not once only, but throughout His ministry, He Who bids us bear our cross while we follow Him, was consciously bearing His own. We must not limit to "three days" the sorrows which redeemed the world.

BREAD IN THE DESERT.

"And the apostles gather themselves together unto Jesus; and they told Him all things, whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught. And He saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desert place apart. And *the people* saw them going, and many knew *them*, and they ran there together on foot from all the cities, and outwent them. And He came forth and saw a great multitude, and He had compassion on them, because they were as

sheep not having a shepherd: and He began to teach them many things. And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came unto Him, and said, The place is desert, and the day is now far spent: send them away, that they may go into the country and villages round about, and buy themselves somewhat to eat. But He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? And He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go *and* see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. And He commanded them that all should sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. And He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake the loaves; and He gave to the disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided He among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up broken pieces, twelve basketfuls, and also of the fishes. And they that ate the loave were five thousand men. And straightway He constrained His disciples to enter into the boat, and to go before *Him* unto the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself sendeth the multitude away. And after He had taken leave of them He departed into the mountain to pray."—MARK vi. 30–46 (R.V.).

THE Apostles, now first called by that name, because now first these "Messengers" had carried the message of their Lord, returned and told Him all, the miracles they had performed, and whatever they had taught. From the latter clause it is plain that to preach "that men should repent," involved arguments, motives, promises, and perhaps threatenings which rendered it no meagre announcement. It is in truth a demand which involves free will and responsibility as its bases, and has hell or heaven for the result of disobedience or compliance. Into what controversies may it have led these first preachers of Jesus! All was now submitted to the judgment of their Master. And happy are they still who do not shrink from the healing pain of bringing all their actions and words to Him, and hearkening what the Lord will speak.

Upon the whole, they brought a record of success,

And around Him also were so many coming and going that they had no leisure so much as to eat. Whereupon Jesus draws them aside to rest awhile. For the balance must never be forgotten between the outer and the inner life. The Lord Himself spent the following night in prayer, until He saw the distress of His disciples, and came to them upon the waves. And the time was at hand when they, who now rejoiced that the devils were subject unto them, should learn by sore humiliation and defeat that this kind goeth not forth except by prayer. We may be certain that it was not bodily repose alone that Jesus desired for his flushed and excited ambassadors, in the hour of their success. And yet bodily repose also at such a time is healing, and in the very pause, the silence, the cessation of the rush, pressure, and excitement of every conspicuous career, there is an opportunity and even a suggestion of calm and humble recollection of the soul. Accordingly they crossed in the boat to some quiet spot, open and unreclaimed, but very far from such dreariness as the mention of a desert suggests to us. But the people saw Him, and watched His course, while outrunning him along the coast, and their numbers were augmented from every town as they poured through it, until He came forth and saw a great multitude, and knew that His quest of solitude was baffled. Few things are more trying than the world's remorseless intrusion upon one's privacy, and subversions of plans which one has laid, not for himself alone. But Jesus was as thoughtful for the multitude as He had just shown Himself to be for His disciples. Not to petulance but to compassion did their urgency excite Him; for as they streamed across the wilderness, far from believing upon Him, but yet conscious of sore need,

unsatisfied with the doctrine of their professional teachers, and just bereaved of the Baptist, they seemed in the desert like sheep that had no shepherd. And He patiently taught them many things.

Nor was He careful only for their souls. We have now reached that remarkable miracle which alone is related by all the four Evangelists. And the narratives, while each has its individual and peculiar points, corroborate each other very strikingly. All four mention the same kind of basket, quite different from what appears in the feeding of the four thousand. St. John alone tells us that it was the season of the Passover, the middle of the Galilean spring-time; but yet this agrees exactly with St. Mark's allusion to the "green grass" which summer has not yet dried up. All four have recorded that Jesus "blessed" or "gave thanks," and three of them that He looked up to heaven while doing so. What was there so remarkable, so intense or pathetic in His expression, that it should have won this three-fold celebration? If we remember the symbolical meaning of what He did, and that as His hands were laid upon the bread which He would break, so His own body should soon be broken for the relief of the hunger of the world, how can we doubt that absolute self-devotion, infinite love, and pathetic resignation were in that wonderful look, which never could be forgotten?

There could have been but few women and children among the multitudes who "outran Jesus," and these few would certainly have been trodden down if a rush of strong and hungry men for bread had taken place. Therefore St. John mentions that while Jesus bade "the people" to be seated, it was the men who were actually arranged (vi. 10 R.V.). Groups of fifty were

easy to keep in order, and a hundred of these were easily counted. And thus it comes to pass that we know that there were five thousand men, while the women and children remained unreckoned, as St. Matthew asserts, and St. Mark implies. This is a kind of harmony which we do not find in two versions of any legend. Nor could any legendary impulse have imagined the remarkable injuction, which impressed all four Evangelists, to be frugal when it would seem that the utmost lavishness was pardonable. They were not indeed bidden to gather up fragments left behind upon the ground, for thrift is not meanness; but the "broken pieces" which our Lord had provided over and above should not be lost. "This union of economy with creative power," said Olshausen, "could never have been invented, and yet Nature, that mirror of the Divine perfections, exhibits the same combination of boundless munificence with truest frugality." And Godet adds the excellent remark, that "a gift so obtained was not to be squandered."

There is one apparent discord to set against these remarkable harmonies, and it will at least serve to show that they are not calculated and artificial.

St. John represents Jesus as the first to ask Philip, Whence are we to buy bread? whereas the others represent the Twelve as urging upon Him the need to dismiss the multitude, at so late an hour, from a place so ill provided. The inconsistency is only an apparent one. It was early in the day, and upon "seeing a great company come unto Him," that Jesus questioned Philip, who might have remembered an Old Testament precedent, when Elisha said "Give unto the people that they may eat. And his servitor said, What? shall I set this before an hundred men? He said, again . . .

they shall both eat and shall also leave thereof." But the faith of Philip did not respond, and if any hope of a miracle were excited, it faded as time passed over. Hours later, when the day was far spent, the Twelve, now perhaps excited by Philip's misgiving, and repeating his calculation about the two hundred pence, urge Jesus to dismiss the multitude. They took no action until "the time was already past," but Jesus saw the end from the beginning. And surely the issue taught them not to distrust their Master's power. Now the same power is for ever with the Church; and our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of food and raiment.

Even in the working of a miracle, the scantiest means vouchsafed by Providence are not despised. Jesus takes the barley-loaves and the fishes, and so teaches all men that true faith is remote indeed from the fanaticism which neglects any resources brought within the reach of our study and our toil. And to show how really these materials were employed, the broken pieces which they gathered are expressly said to have been composed of the barley-loaves and of the fish.

Indeed it must be remarked that in no miracle of the Gospel did Jesus actually create. He makes no new members of the body, but restores old useless ones. "And so, without a substratum to work upon He creates neither bread nor wine." To do this would not have been a whit more difficult, but it would have expressed less aptly His mission, which was not to create a new system of thing, sbut to renew the old, to recover the lost sheep, and to heal the sick at heart.

Every circumstance of this miracle is precious. That vigilant care for the weak which made the people

sit down in groups, and await their turn to be supplied, is a fine example of the practical eye for details which was never, before or since, so perfectly united with profound thought, insight into the mind of God and the wants of the human race.

The words, Give ye them to eat, may serve as an eternal rebuke to the helplessness of the Church, face to face with a starving world, and regarding her own scanty resources with dismay. In the presence of heathenism, of dissolute cities, and of semi-pagan peasantries, she is ever looking wistfully to some costly far-off supply. And her Master is ever bidding her believe that the few loaves and fishes in her hand, if blessed and distributed by Him, will satisfy the famine of mankind.

For in truth He is Himself this bread. All that the Gospel of St. John explains, underlies the narratives of the four. And shame on us, with Christ given to us to feed and strengthen us, if we think our resources scanty, if we grudge to share them with mankind, if we let our thoughts wander away to the various palliatives for human misery and salves for human anguish, which from time to time gain the credence of an hour; if we send the hungry to the country and villages round about, when Christ the dispenser of the Bread of souls, for ever present in His Church, is saying, They need not depart, give ye them to eat.

The sceptical explanations of this narrative are exquisitely ludicrous. One tells us how, finding themselves in a desert, "thanks to their extreme frugality they were able to exist, and this was naturally" (what, naturally?) "regarded as a miracle." This is called the legendary explanation, and every one can judge for himself how much it succeeds in explaining to him.

Another tells us that Jesus being greater than Moses, it was felt that He must have outstripped him in miraculous power. And so the belief grew up that as Moses fed a nation during forty years, with angels' food, He, to exceed this, must have bestowed upon five thousand men one meal of barley bread.

This is called the mythical explanation, and the credulity which accepts it must not despise Christians, who only believe their Bibles.

Jesus had called away His followers to rest. The multitude which beheld this miracle was full of passionate hate against the tyrant, upon whose hands the blood of the Baptist was still warm. All they wanted was a leader. And now they would fain have taken Jesus by force to thrust this perilous honour upon Him. Therefore He sent away His disciples first, that ambition and hope might not agitate and secularise their minds; and when He had dismissed the multitude He Himself ascended the neighbouring mountain, to cool His frame with the pure breezes, and to refresh His Holy Spirit by communion with His Father. Prayer was natural to Jesus; but think how much more needful is it to us. And yet perhaps we have never taken one hour from sleep for God.

"*JESUS WALKING ON THE WATER.*"

MARK vi. 47-52 (R.V.).

(See iv. 36, pp. 133—140.)

UNWASHEN HANDS.

"And when they had crossed over, they came to the land unto Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. . . . Making void the word of God by your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do."—MARK vi. 53–vii. 13 (R.V.).

THERE is a condition of mind which readily accepts the temporal blessings of religion, and yet neglects, and perhaps despises, the spiritual truths which they ratify and seal. When Jesus landed on Gennesaret, He was straightway known, and as He passed through the district, there was hasty bearing of all the sick to meet Him, laying them in public places, and beseeching Him that they might touch, if no more, the border of His garment. By the faith which believed in so easy a cure, a timid woman had recently won signal commendation. But the very fact that her cure had become public, while it accounts for the action of these crowds, deprives it of any special merit. We only read that as many as touched Him were made whole. And we know that just now He was forsaken by many even of His disciples, and had to ask His very apostles, Will ye also go away?

Thus we find these two conflicting movements: among the sick and their friends a profound persuasion that He can heal them; and among those whom He would fain teach, resentment and revolt against His doctrine. The combination is strange, but we dare not call it unfamiliar. We see the opposing tendencies even in the same man, for sorrow and pain drive to His knees many a one who will not take upon His neck the easy yoke. Yet how absurd it is to believe in Christ's goodness and His power, and still to dare to sin against Him, still to reject the inevitable inference

that His teaching must bring bliss. Men ought to ask themselves what is involved when they pray to Christ and yet refuse to serve Him.

As Jesus moved thus around the district, and responded so amply to their supplication that His very raiment was charged with health as if with electricity, which leaps out at a touch, what an effect He must have produced, even upon the ceremonial purity of the district. Sickness meant defilement, not for the sufferer alone, but for his friends, his nurse, and the bearers of his little pallet. By the recovery of one sick man, a fountain of Levitical pollution was dried up. And the harsh and rigid legalist ought to have perceived that from his own point of view the pilgrimage of Jesus was like the breath of spring upon a garden, to restore its freshness and bloom.

It was therefore an act of portentous waywardness when, at this juncture, a complaint was made of His indifference to ceremonial cleanness. For of course a charge against His disciples was really a complaint against the influence which guided them so ill.

It was not a disinterested complaint. Jerusalem was alarmed at the new movement resulting from the mission of the Twelve, their miracles, and the mighty works which He Himself had lately wrought. And a deputation of Pharisees and scribes came from this centre of ecclesiastical prejudice, to bring Him to account. They do not assail His doctrine, nor charge Him with violating the law itself, for He had put to shame their querulous complaints about the sabbath day. But tradition was altogether upon their side: it was a weapon ready sharpened for their use against one so free, unconventional and fearless.

The law had imposed certain restrictions upon the

chosen race, restrictions which were admirably sanitary in their nature, while aiming also at preserving the isolation of Israel from the corrupt and foul nations which lay around. All such restrictions were now about to pass away, because religion was to become aggressive, it was henceforth to invade the nations from whose inroads it had heretofore sought a covert. But the Pharisees had not been content even with the severe restrictions of the law. They had not regarded these as a fence for themselves against spiritual impurity, but as an elaborate and artificial substitute for love and trust. And therefore, as love and spiritual religion faded out of their hearts, they were the more jealous and sensitive about the letter of the law. They "fenced" it with elaborate rules, and precautions against accidental transgressions, superstitiously dreading an involuntary infraction of its minutest details. Certain substances were unclean food. But who could tell whether some atom of such substance, blown about in the dust of summer, might adhere to the hand with which he ate, or to the cups and pots whence his food was drawn? Moreover, the Gentile nations were unclean, and it was not possible to avoid all contact with them in the market-places, returning whence, therefore, every devout Jew was careful to wash himself, which washing, though certainly not an immersion, is here plainly called a baptism. Thus an elaborate system of ceremonial washing, not for cleansing, but as a religious precaution, had grown up among the Jews.

But the disciples of Jesus had begun to learn their emancipation. Deeper and more spiritual conceptions of God and man and duty had grown up in them. And the Pharisees saw that they ate their bread with unwashen hands. It availed nothing that half a population

owed purity and health to their Divine benevolence, if in the process the letter of a tradition were infringed. It was necessary to expostulate with Jesus, because they walked not according to the tradition of the elders, that dried skin of an old orthodoxy in which prescription and routine would ever fain shut up the seething enthusiasms and insights of the present time.

With such attempts to restrict and cramp the free life of the soul, Jesus could have no sympathy. He knew well that an exaggerated trust in any form, any routine or ritual whatever, was due to the need of some stay and support for hearts which have ceased to trust in a Father of souls. But He chose to leave them without excuse by showing their transgression of actual precepts which real reverence for God would have respected. Like books of etiquette for people who have not the instincts of gentlemen; so do ceremonial religions spring up where the instinct of respect for the will of God is dull or dead. Accordingly Jesus quotes against these Pharisees a distinct precept, a word not of their fathers, but of God, which their tradition had caused them to trample upon. If any genuine reverence for His commandment had survived, it would have been outraged by such a collision between the text and the gloss, the precept and the precautionary supplement. But they had never felt the incongruity, never been jealous enough for the commandment of God to revolt against the encroaching tradition which insulted it. The case which Jesus gave, only as one of "many such like things," was an abuse of the system of vows, and of dedicated property. It would seem that from the custom of "devoting" a man's property, and thus putting it beyond his further control, had grown up the abuse of consecrating it with such

limitations, that it should still be available for the owner, but out of his power to give to others. And thus, by a spell as abject as the taboo of the South Sea islanders, a man glorified God by refusing help to his father and mother, without being at all the poorer for the so-called consecration of his means. And even if he awoke up to the shameful nature of his deed, it was too late, for "ye no longer suffer him to do ought for his father or his mother." And yet Moses had made it a capital offence to "speak evil of father or mother." Did they then allow such slanders? Not at all, and so they would have refused to confess any aptness in the quotation. But Jesus was not thinking of the letter of a precept, but of the spirit and tendency of a religion, to which they were blind. With what scorn He regarded their miserable subterfuges, is seen by His vigorous word, "full well do ye make void the commandment of God that ye may keep your traditions."

Now the root of all this evil was unreality. It was not merely because their heart was far from God that they invented hollow formalisms; indifference leads to neglect, not to a perverted and fastidious earnestness. But while their hearts were earthly, they had learned to honour God with their lips. The judgments which had sent their fathers into exile, the pride of their unique position among the nations, and the self-interest of privileged classes, all forbade them to neglect the worship in which they had no joy, and which, therefore, they were unable to follow as it reached out into infinity, panting after God, a living God. There was no principle of life, growth, aspiration, in their dull obedience. And what could it turn into but a routine, a ritual, a verbal homage, and the honour of the lips only? And how could such a worship fail to shelter

itself in evasions from the heart-searching earnestness of a law which was spiritual, while the worshipper was carnal and sold under sin?

It was inevitable that collisions should arise. And the same results will always follow the same causes. Wherever men bow the knee for the sake of respectability, or because they dare not absent themselves from the outward haunts of piety, yet fail to love God and their neighbour, there will the form outrage the spirit, and in vain will they worship, teaching as their doctrines the traditions of men.

Very completely indeed was the relative position of Jesus and His critics reversed, since they had expressed pain at the fruitless effort of His mother to speak with Him, and He had seemed to set the meanest disciple upon a level with her. But He never really denied the voice of nature, and they never really heard it. An affectation of respect would have satisfied their heartless formality: He thought it the highest reward of discipleship to share the warmth of His love. And therefore, in due time, it was seen that His critics were all unconscious of the wickedness of filial neglect which set His heart on fire.

CHAPTER VII.

THINGS WHICH DEFILE.

"And He called to Him the multitude again, and said unto them, Hear Me all of you, and understand: there is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him: but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man. And when He was entered into the house from the multitude, His disciples asked of Him the parable. And He saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Perceive ye not, that whatsoever from without goeth into the man, *it* cannot defile him; because it goeth not into his heart, but into his belly, and goeth out into the draught? *This He said*, making all meats clean. And He said, That which proceedeth out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness: all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man."—MARK vii. 14–23 (R.V.).

WHEN Jesus had exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, He took a bold and significant step. Calling the multitude to Him, He publicly announced that no diet can really pollute the soul; only its own actions and desires can do that: not that which entereth into the man can defile him, but the things which proceed out of the man.

He does not as yet proclaim the abolition of the law, but He surely declares that it is only temporary, because it is conventional, not rooted in the eternal distinctions between right and wrong, but artificial. And He shows that its time is short indeed, by charg-

ing the multitude to understand how limited is its reach, how poor are its effects.

Such teaching, addressed with marked emphasis to the public, the masses, whom the Pharisees despised as ignorant of the law, and cursed, was a defiance indeed. And the natural consequence was an opposition so fierce that He was driven to betake Himself, for the only time, and like Elijah in his extremity, to a Gentile land. And yet there was abundant evidence in the Old Testament itself that the precepts of the law were not the life of souls. David ate the shewbread. The priests profaned the sabbath. Isaiah spiritualized fasting. Zechariah foretold the consecration of the Philistines. Whenever the spiritual energies of the ancient saints received a fresh access, they were seen to strive against and shake off some of the trammels of a literal and servile legalism. The doctrine of Jesus explained and justified what already was felt by the foremost spirits in Israel.

When they were alone, "the disciples asked of Him the parable," that is, in other words, the saying which they felt to be deeper than they understood, and full of far-reaching issues. But Jesus rebuked them for not understanding what uncleanness really meant. For Him, defilement was badness, a condition of the soul. And therefore meats could not defile a man, because they did not reach the heart, but only the bodily organs. In so doing, as St. Mark plainly adds, He made all meats clean, and thus pronounced the doom of Judaism, and the new dispensation of the Spirit. In truth, St. Paul did little more than expand this memorable saying. "Nothing that goeth into a man can defile him," here is the germ of all the decision about idol meats—"neither if 'one' eat is he the better,

neither if he eat not is he the worse." "The things which proceed out of the man are those which defile the man," here is the germ of all the demonstration that love fulfils the law, and that our true need is to be renewed inwardly, so that we may bring forth fruit unto God.

But the true pollution of the man comes from within; and the life is stained because the heart is impure. For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, like the uncharitable and bitter judgments of His accusers—and thence come also the sensual indulgences which men ascribe to the flesh, but which depraved imaginations excite, and love of God and their neighbour would restrain—and thence are the sins of violence which men excuse by pleading sudden provocation, whereas the spark led to a conflagration only because the heart was a dry fuel—and thence, plainly enough, come deceit and railing, pride and folly.

It is a hard saying, but our conscience acknowledges the truth of it. We are not the toy of circumstances, but such as we have made ourselves; and our lives would have been pure if the stream had flowed from a pure fountain. However modern sentiment may rejoice in highly coloured pictures of the noble profligate and his pure minded and elegant victim; of the brigand or the border ruffian full of kindness, with a heart as gentle as his hands are red; and however true we may feel it to be that the worst heart may never have betrayed itself by the worst actions, but many that are first shall be last, it still continues to be the fact, and undeniable when we do not sophisticate our judgment, that "all these evil things proceed from within."

It is also true that they "further defile the man." The corruption which already existed in the heart is made

worse by passing into action; shame and fear are weakened; the will is confirmed in evil; a gap is opened or widened between the man who commits a new sin, and the virtue on which he has turned his back. Few, alas! are ignorant of the defiling power of a bad action, or even of a sinful thought deliberately harboured, and the harbouring of which is really an action, a decision of the will.

This word which makes all meats clean, ought for ever to decide the question whether certain drinks are in the abstract unlawful for a Christian.

We must remember that it leaves untouched the question, what restrictions may be necessary for men who have depraved and debased their own appetites, until innocent indulgence *does* reach the heart and pervert it. Hand and foot are innocent, but men there are who cannot enter into life otherwise than halt or maimed. Also it leaves untouched the question, as long as such men exist, how far may I be privileged to share and so to lighten the burden imposed on them by past transgressions? It is surely a noble sign of religious life in our day, that many thousands can say, as the Apostle said, of innocent joys, "Have we not a right? . . . Nevertheless we did not use this right, but we bear all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ."

Nevertheless the rule is absolute: "Whatsoever from without goeth into the man, it cannot defile him." And the Church of Christ is bound to maintain, uncompromised and absolute, the liberty of Christian souls.

Let us not fail to contrast such teaching as this of Jesus with that of our modern materialism.

"The value of meat and drink is perfectly trans-

cendental," says one. "Man is what he eats," says another. But it is enough to make us tremble, to ask what will issue from such teaching if it ever grasps firmly the mind of a single generation. What will become of honesty, when the value of what may be had by theft is transcendental? How shall armies be persuaded to suffer hardness, and populations to famish within beleaguered walls, when they learn that "man is what he eats," so that his very essence is visibly enfeebled, his personality starved out, as he grows pale and wasted underneath his country's flag? In vain shall such a generation strive to keep alive the flame of generous self-devotion. Self-devotion seemed to their fathers to be the noblest attainment; to them it can be only a worn-out form of speech to say that the soul can overcome the flesh. For to them the man *is* the flesh; he is the resultant of his nourishment; what enters into the mouth makes his character, for it makes him all.

There is that within us all which knows better; which sets against the aphorism, "Man is what he eats;" the text "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he;" which will always spurn the doctrine of the brute, when it is boldly confronted with the doctrine of the Crucified.

THE CHILDREN AND THE DOGS.

"And from thence He arose, and went away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered into a house, and would have no man know it: and He could not be hid. But straightway a woman, whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, having heard of Him, came and fell down at His feet. Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophœnician by race. And she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. And He said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. But she answered and saith unto Him, Yea, Lord: even the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And she went away unto her house, and found the child laid upon the bed, and the devil gone out."—MARK vii. 24–30 (R.V.).

THE ingratitude and perverseness of His countrymen have now driven Jesus into retirement "on the borders" of heathenism. It it is not clear that He has yet crossed the frontier, and some presumption to the contrary is found in the statement that a woman, drawn by a fame which had long since gone throughout all Syria, "came out of those borders" to reach Him. She was not only "a Greek" (by language or by creed as conjecture may decide, though very probably the word means little more than a Gentile), but even of the especially accursed race of Canaan, the reprobate of reprobates. And yet the prophet Zechariah had foreseen a time when the Philistine also should be a remnant for our God, and as a chieftain in Judah, and when the most stubborn race of all the Canaanites should be absorbed in Israel as thoroughly as that which gave Araunah to the kindliest intercourse with David, for Ekron should be as a Jebusite (ix. 7). But the hour for breaking down the middle wall of partition was not yet fully come. Nor did any friend plead for this unhappy woman, that she

loved the nation and had built a synagogue; nothing as yet lifted her above the dead level of that paganism to which Christ, in the days of His flesh and upon earth, had no commission. Even the great champion and apostle of the Gentiles confessed that his Lord was a minister of the circumcision by the grace of God, and it was by His ministry to the Jews that the Gentiles were ultimately to be won. We need not be surprised therefore at His silence when she pleaded, for this might well be calculated to elicit some expression of faith, something to separate her from her fellows, and so enable Him to bless her without breaking down prematurely all distinctions. Also it must be considered that nothing could more offend His countrymen than to grant her prayer, while as yet it was impossible to hope for any compensating harvest among her fellows, such as had been reaped in Samaria. What is surprising is the apparent harshness of expression which follows that silence, when even His disciples are induced to intercede for her. But theirs was only the softness which yields to clamour, as many people give alms, not to silent worth but to loud and pertinacious importunity. And they even presumed to thow their own discomfort into the scale, and urge as a reason for this intercession, that she crieth after *us*. But Jesus was occupied with His mission, and unwilling to go farther than He was sent.

In her agony she pressed nearer still to Him when He refused, and worshipped Him, no longer as the Son of David, since what was Hebrew in His commission made against her; but simply appealed to His compassion, calling Him Lord. The absence of these details from St. Mark's narrative is interesting, and shows the mistake of thinking that his Gospel is simply

the most graphic and the fullest. It is such when our Lord Himself is in action; its information is derived from one who pondered and told all things, not as they were pictorial in themselves, but as they illustrated the one great figure of the Son of man. And so the answer of Jesus is fully given, although it does not appear as if grace were poured into His lips. "Let the children first be filled, for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs." It might seem that sterner words could scarcely have been spoken, and that His kindness was only for the Jews, who even in their ingratitude were to the best of the Gentiles as children compared with dogs. Yet she does not contradict Him. Neither does she argue back,—for the words "Truth, Lord, but . . ." have rightly disappeared from the Revised Version, and with them a certain contentious aspect which they give to her reply. On the contrary she assents, she accepts all the seeming severity of His view, because her penetrating faith has detected its kindly undertone, and the triple opportunity which it offers to a quick and confiding intelligence. It is indeed touching to reflect how impregnable was Jesus in controversy with the keenest intellects of Judaism, with how sharp a weapon He rent their snares, and retorted their arguments to their confusion, and then to observe Him inviting, tempting, preparing the way for an argument which would lead Him, gladly won, captive to a heathen's and a woman's importunate and trustful sagacity. It is the same Divine condescension which gave to Jacob his new name of Israel because he had striven with God and prevailed.

And let us reverently ponder the fact that this pagan mother of a demoniacal child, this woman whose name

has perished, is the only person who won a dialectical victory in striving with the Wisdom of God; such a victory as a father allows to his eager child, when he raises gentle obstacles, and even assumes a transparent mask of harshness, but never passes the limit of the trust and love which he is probing.

The first and most obvious opportunity which He gives to her is nevertheless hard to show in English. He might have used an epithet suitable for those fierce creatures which prowl through Eastern streets at night without any master, living upon refuse, a peril even to men who are unarmed. But Jesus used a diminutive word, not found elsewhere in the New Testament, and quite unsuitable to those fierce beasts, a word "in which the idea of uncleanness gives place to that of dependence, of belonging to man and to the family." No one applies our colloquial epithet "doggie" to a fierce or rabid brute. Thus Jesus really domesticated the Gentile world. And nobly, eagerly, yet very modestly she used this tacit concession, when she repeated His carefully selected word, and inferred from it that her place was not among those vile "dogs" which are "without," but with the domestic dogs, the little dogs underneath the table.

Again, she observed the promise which lurked under seeming refusal, when He said, "Let the children first be filled," and so implied that her turn should come, that it was only a question of time. And so she answers that such dogs as He would make of her and hers do not fast utterly until their mealtime after the children have been satisfied; they wait under the table, and some ungrudged fragments reach them there, some "crumbs."

Moreover, and perhaps chiefly, the bread she craves

need not be torn from hungry children. Their Benefactor has had to wander off into concealment, they have let fall, unheeding, not only crumbs, although her noble tact expresses it thus lightly to their countryman, but far more than she divined, even the very Bread of Life. Surely His own illustration has admitted her right to profit by the heedlessness of "the children." And He *had* admitted all this: He had meant to be thus overcome. One loves to think of the first flush of hope in that trembling mother's heavy heart, as she discerned His intention and said within herself, "Oh, surely I am not mistaken; He does not really refuse at all; He wills that I should answer Him and prevail." One supposes that she looked up, half afraid to utter the great rejoinder, and took courage when she met His questioning inviting gaze.

And then comes the glad response, no longer spoken coldly and without an epithet: "O woman, great is thy faith." He praises not her adroitness nor her humility, but the faith which would not doubt, in that dark hour, that light was behind the cloud; and so He sets no other limit to His reward than the limit of her desires: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Let us learn that no case is too desperate for prayer, and perseverance will surely find at last that our Lord delighteth to be gracious. Let us be certain that the brightest and most confiding view of all His dealings is the truest, and man, if only he trusts aright, shall live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Thus did Jesus declare, in action as in word, the fading out of all distinction between the ceremonially clean and unclean. He crossed the limits of the Holy Land: He found great faith in a daughter of the accursed race; and He ratified and acted upon her

claim that the bread which fell neglected from the table of the Jew was not forbidden to the hunger of the Gentile. The history of the Acts of the Apostles is already here in spirit.

THE DEAF AND DUMB MAN.

"And again He went out from the borders of Tyre, and came through Sidon unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the borders of Decapolis. And they bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech Him to lay His hand upon him. And He took him aside from the multitude privately, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spat, and touched His tongue; and looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And He charged them that they should tell no man: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it. And they were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh even the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."—MARK vii. 31–37 (R.V.).

THERE are curious and significant varieties in the methods by which our Saviour healed. We have seen Him, when watched on the sabbath by eager and expectant foes, baffling all their malice by a miracle without a deed, by refusing to cross the line of the most rigid and ceremonial orthodoxy, by only commanding an innocent gesture, Stretch forth thine hand. In sharp contrast with such a miracle is the one which we have now reached. There is brought to Him a man who is deaf, and whose speech therefore could not have been more than a babble, since it is by hearing that we learn to articulate; but of whom we are plainly told that he suffered from organic inability to utter as well as to hear, for he had an impediment in his speech, the string of his tongue needed to be loosed, and Jesus touched his tongue as well as his ears, to heal him.

It should be observed that no unbelieving theory can explain the change in our Lord's method. Some pretend that all the stories of His miracles grew up afterward, from the sense of awe with which He was regarded. How does that agree with effort, sighing, and even gradation in the stages of recovery, following after the most easy, astonishing and instantaneous cures? Others believe that the enthusiasm of His teaching and the charm of His presence conveyed healing efficacy to the impressible and the nervous. How does this account for the fact that His earliest miracles were the prompt and effortless ones, and as time passes on, He secludes the patient and uses agencies, as if the resistance to His power were more appreciable? Enthusiasm would gather force with every new success.

All becomes clear when we accept the Christian doctrine. Jesus came in the fulness of the love of God, with both hands filled with gifts. On His part there is no hesitation and no limit. But on the part of man there is doubt, misconception, and at last open hostility. A real chasm is opened between man and the grace He gives, so that, although not straitened in Him, they are straitened in their own affections. Even while they believe in Him as a healer, they no longer accept Him as their Lord.

And Jesus makes it plain to them that the gift is no longer so easy, spontaneous and of public right as formerly. In His own country He could not do many mighty works. And now, returning by indirect routes, and privately, from the heathen shores whither Jewish enmity had driven Him, He will make the multitude feel a kind of exclusion, taking the patient from among them, as He does again presently in Bethsaida (chap. viii. 23). There is also, in the deliberate act of seclusion

and in the means employed, a stimulus for the faith of the sufferer, which would scarcely have been needed a little while before.

The people were unconscious of any reason why this cure should differ from former ones. And so they besought Jesus to lay His hand on him, the usual and natural expression for a conveyance of invisible power. But even if no other objection had existed, this action would have meant little to the deaf and dumb man, living in a silent world, and needing to have his faith aroused by some yet plainer sign. Jesus therefore removes him from the crowd whose curiosity would distract his attention—even as by affliction and pain He still isolates each of us at times from the world, shutting us up with God.

He speaks the only language intelligible to such a man, the language of signs, putting His fingers into his ears as if to break a seal, conveying the moisture of His own lip to the silent tongue, as if to impart its faculty, and then, at what should have been the exultant moment of conscious and triumphant power, He sighed deeply.

What an unexpected revelation of the man rather than the wonder worker. How unlike anything that theological myth or heroic legend would have invented. Perhaps, as Keble sings, He thought of those moral defects for which, in a responsible universe, no miracle may be wrought, of "the deaf heart, the dumb by choice." Perhaps, according to Stier's ingenious guess, He sighed because, in our sinful world, the gift of hearing is so doubtful a blessing, and the faculty of speech so apt to be perverted. One can almost imagine that no human endowment is ever given by Him Who knows all, without a touch of sadness. But it is more

natural to suppose that He Who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and Who bare our sickness, thought upon the countless miseries of which this was but a specimen, and sighed for the perverseness by which the fulness of His compassion was being restrained. We are reminded by that sigh, however we explain it, that the only triumphs which made Him rejoice in Spirit were very different from displays of His physical ascendancy.

It is interesting to observe that St. Mark, informed by the most ardent and impressible of the apostles, by him who reverted, long afterwards, to the voice which he heard in the holy mount, has recorded several of the Aramaic words which Jesus uttered at memorable junctures. "Ephphatha, Be opened," He said, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and his speech, hitherto incoherent, became plain. But the Gospel which tells us the first word he heard is silent about what he said. Only we read, and this is suggestive enough, that the command was at once given to him, as well as to the bystanders, to keep silent. Not copious speech, but wise restraint, is what the tongue needs most to learn. To him, as to so many whom Christ had healed, the injunction came, not to preach without a commission, not to suppose that great blessings require loud announcement, or unfit men for lowly and quiet places. Legend would surely have endowed with special eloquence the lips which Jesus unsealed. He charged them that they should tell no man.

It was a double miracle, and the latent unbelief became clear of the very men who had hoped for some measure of blessing. For they were beyond measure astonished, saying He doeth all things well, celebrating the power which restored the hearing and the speech

together. Do we blame their previous incredulity? Perhaps we also expect some blessing from our Lord, yet fail to bring Him all we have and all we are for blessing. Perhaps we should be astonished beyond measure if we received at the hands of Jesus a sanctification that extended to all our powers.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FOUR THOUSAND.

"In those days, when there was again a great multitude, and they had nothing to eat, He called unto Him His disciples, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way; and some of them are come from far. And His disciples answered Him, Whence shall one be able to fill these men with bread here in a desert place? And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And He commandeth the multitude to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, He brake, and gave to His disciples, to set before them; and they set them before the multitude. And they had a few small fishes: and having blessed them, He commanded to set these also before them. And they did eat, and were filled: and they took up, of broken pieces that remained over, seven baskets. And they were about four thousand: and He sent them away. And straightway He entered into the boat with His disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha."—MARK viii. 1–10 (R.V.).

WE now come upon a miracle strangely similar to that of the Feeding of the Five Thousand. And it is worth while to ask what would have been the result, if the Gospels which contain this narrative had omitted the former one. Scepticism would have scrutinized every difference between the two, regarding them as variations of the same story, to discover traces of the growth of the myth or legend, and entirely to discredit it. Now however it is plain that the events are quite distinct; and we cannot doubt but that information as full would clear away as completely many a

perplexity which still entangles us. Archbishop Trench has well shown that the later narrative cannot have grown out of the earlier, because it has not grown at all, but fallen away. A new legend always "outstrips the old, but here . . . the numbers fed are smaller, the supply of food is greater, and the fragments that remain are fewer." The latter point is however doubtful. It is likely that the baskets, though fewer, were larger, for in such a one St. Paul was lowered down over the wall of Damascus (Acts ix. 25). In all the Gospels the Greek word for baskets in the former miracle is different from the latter. And hence arises an interesting coincidence; for when the disciples had gone into a desert place, and there gathered the fragments into wallets, each of them naturally carried one of these, and accordingly twelve were filled. But here they had recourse apparently to the large baskets of persons who sold bread, and the number seven remains unaccounted for. Scepticism indeed persuades itself that the whole story is to be spiritualized, the twelve baskets answering to the twelve apostles who distributed the Bread of Life, and the seven to the seven deacons. How came it then that the sorts of baskets are so well discriminated, that the inferior ministers are represented by the larger ones, and that the bread is not dealt out from these baskets but gathered into them?

The second repetition of such a work is a fine proof of that genuine kindness of heart, to which a miracle is not merely an evidence, nor rendered useless as soon as the power to work it is confessed. Jesus did not shrink from thus repeating Himself, even upon a lower level, because His object was not spectacular but beneficent. He sought not to astonish but to bless.

It is plain that Jesus strove to lead His disciples,

aware of the former miracle, up to the notion of its repetition. With this object He marshalled all the reasons why the people should be relieved. "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way; and some of them are come from far." It is the grand argument from human necessity to the Divine compassion. It is an argument which ought to weigh equally with the Church. For if it is promised that "nothing shall be impossible" to faith and prayer, then the deadly wants of debauched cities, of ignorant and brutal peasantries, and of heathenisms festering in their corruptions—all these, by their very urgency, are vehement appeals instead of the discouragements we take them for. And whenever man is baffled and in need, there he is entitled to fall back upon the resources of the Omnipotent.

It may be that the disciples had some glimmering hope, but they did not venture to suggest anything; they only asked, Whence shall one be able to fill these men with bread here in a desert place? It is the cry of unbelief—*our* cry, when we look at our resources, and declare our helplessness, and conclude that possibly God may interpose, but otherwise nothing can be done. We ought to be the priests of a famishing world (so ignorant of any relief, so miserable), its interpreters and intercessors, full of hope and energy. But we are content to look at our empty treasuries, and ineffective organizations, and to ask, Whence shall a man be able to fill these men with bread?

They have ascertained however what resources are forthcoming, and these He proceeds to use, first demanding the faith which He will afterwards honour,

by bidding the multitudes to sit down. And then His loving heart is gratified by relieving the hunger which it pitied, and He promptly sends the multitude away, refreshed and competent for their journey.

THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES.

"And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with Him, seeking of Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him. And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. And He left them, and again entering into *the boat* departed to the other side. And they forgot to take bread; and they had not in the boat with them more than one loaf. And He charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned one with another, saying, We have no bread. And Jesus perceiving it saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? do ye not yet perceive, neither understand? have y your heart hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hea ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces took ye up? They said unto Him, Twelve. And when the seven among the four thousand, how many basketfuls of broken pieces took ye up? And they said unto Him, Seven. And He said unto them, Do ye not yet understand?"—MARK viii. 11–21 (R.V.).

WHENEVER a miracle produced a deep and special impression, the Pharisees strove to spoil its effect by some counter-demonstration. By so doing, and at least appearing to hold the field, since Jesus always yielded this to them, they encouraged their own faction, and shook the confidence of the feeble and hesitating multitude. At almost every crisis they might have been crushed by an appeal to the stormy passions of those whom the Lord had blessed. Once He might have been made a king. Again and again His enemies were conscious that an imprudent word would suffice to make the people stone them. But that would have spoiled the real work of Jesus more than to retreat

before them, now across the lake, or, just before, into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. Doubtless it was this constant avoidance of physical conflict, this habitual repression of the carnal zeal of His supporters, this refusal to form a party instead of founding a Church, which renewed incessantly the courage of His often-baffled foes, and led Him, by the path of steady ceaseless self-depression, to the cross which He foresaw, even while maintaining His unearthly calm, amid the contradiction of sinners against Himself.

Upon the feeding of the four thousand, they demand of Him a sign from heaven. He had wrought for the public no miracle of this peculiar kind. And yet Moses had gone up, in the sight of all Israel, to commune with God in the mount that burned; Samuel had been answered by thunder and rain in the wheat harvest; and Elijah had called down fire both upon his sacrifice and also upon two captains and their bands of fifty. Such a miracle was now declared to be the regular authentication of a messenger from God, and the only sign which evil spirits could not counterfeit.

Moreover the demand would specially embarrass Jesus, because He alone was not accustomed to invoke heaven: His miracles were wrought by the exertion of His own will. And perhaps the challenge implied some understanding of what this peculiarity involved, such as Jesus charged them with, when putting into their mouth the words, This is the heir, come, let us kill Him. Certainly the demand ignored much. Conceding the fact of certain miracles, and yet imposing new conditions of belief, they shut their eyes to the unique nature of the works already wrought, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father which they displayed. They held that thunder and lightning re-

vealed God more certainly than supernatural victories of compassion, tenderness and love. What could be done for moral blindness such as this? How could any sign be devised which unwilling hearts would not evade? No wonder that hearing this demand, Jesus sighed deeply in His spirit. It revealed their utter hardness; it was a snare by which others would be entangled; and for Himself it foretold the cross.

St. Mark simply tells us that He refused to give them any sign. In St. Matthew He justifies this decision by rebuking the moral blindness which demanded it. They had material enough for judgment. The face of the sky foretold storm and fair weather, and the process of nature could be anticipated without miracles to coerce belief. And thus they should have discerned the import of the prophecies, the course of history, the signs of the times in which they lived, so plainly radiant with Messianic promise, so menacing with storm-clouds of vengeance upon sin. The sign was refused moreover to an evil and adulterous generation, as God, in the Old Testament, would not be inquired of at all by such a people as this. This indignant rejoinder St. Mark has compressed into the words, "There shall no sign be given unto this generation"—this which has proof enough, and which deserves none. Men there were to whom a sign from heaven was not refused. At His baptism, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and when the Voice answered His appeal, "Father, glorify Thy name," while the multitude said only that it thundered—at these times His chosen ones received a sign from heaven. But from those who had not was taken away even that which they seemed to have; and the sign of Jonah availed them not.

Once more Jesus "left them" and crossed the lake.

The disciples found themselves with but one loaf, approaching a wilder district, where the ceremonial purity of food could not easily be ascertained. But they had already acted on the principle which Jesus had formally proclaimed, that all meats were clean. And therefore it was not too much to expect them to penetrate below the letter of the words, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and the leaven of Herod." In giving them this enigma to discover, He acted according to His usage, wrapping the spiritual truth in earthly phrases, picturesque and impressive; and He treated them as life treats every one of us, which keeps our responsibility still upon the strain, by presenting new moral problems, fresh questions and trials of insight, for every added attainment which lays our old tasks aside. But they understood Him not. Some new ceremonial appeared to them to be designed, in which everything would be reversed, and the unclean should be those hypocrites, the strictest observers of the old code. Such a mistake, however blameworthy, reveals the profound sense of an ever-widening chasm, and an expectation of a final and hopeless rupture with the chiefs of their religion. It prepares us for what is soon to come, the contrast between the popular belief and theirs, and the selection of a rock on which a new Church is to be built. In the meantime the dire practical inconvenience of this announcement led to hot discussion, because they had no bread. And Jesus, perceiving this, remonstrated in a series of indignant questions. Personal want should not have disturbed their judgment, remembering that twice over He had fed hungry multitudes, and loaded them with the surplus of His gift. Their eyes and ears should have taught them

that He was indifferent to such distinctions, and His doctrine could never result in a new Judaism. How was it that they did not understand ?

Thereupon they perceived that His warning was figurative. He had spoken to them, after feeding the five thousand, of spiritual bread which He would give, even His flesh to be their food. What then could He have meant by the leaven of the Pharisees but the imparting of *their* religious tendencies, their teaching, and their insincerity ?

Was there any real danger that these, His chosen ones, should be shaken by the demand for a sign from heaven ? Did not Philip presently, when Christ spoke of seeing the Father, eagerly cry out that this, if it were granted, would suffice them ? In these words he confessed the misgiving which haunted their minds, and the longing for a heavenly sign. And yet the essence of the vision of God was in the life and the love which they had failed to know. If they could not see Him in these, He must for ever remain invisible to them.

We too require the same caution. When we long for miracles, neglecting those standing miracles of our faith, the gospel and the Church : when our reason is satisfied of a doctrine or a duty, and yet we remain irresolute, sighing for the impulse of some rare spiritual enlightenment or excitement, for a revival, or a mission, or an oration to lift us above ourselves, we are virtually asking to be shown what we already confess, to behold a sign, while we possess the evidence.

And the only wisdom of the languid, irresolute will, which postpones action in hope that feeling may be deepened, is to pray. It is by the effort of communion with the unfelt, but confessed Reality above us, that healthy feeling is to be recovered.

MEN AS TREES.

"And they come unto Bethsaida. And they bring to Him a blind man, and beseech Him to touch him. And He took hold of the blind man by the hand, and brought him out of the village; and when He had spit on his eyes, and laid His hands upon him, He asked him, Seest thou aught? And he looked up, and said, I see men; for I behold *them* as trees, walking. Then again He laid His hands upon his eyes; and he looked stedfastly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly. And He sent him away to his home, saying, Do not even enter into the village."—MARK viii. 22–26 (R.V.).

WHEN the disciples arrived at Bethsaida, they were met by the friends of a blind man, who besought Him to touch him. And this gave occasion to the most remarkable by far of all the progressive and tentative miracles, in which means were employed, and the result was gradually reached. The reasons for advancing to this cure by progressive stages have been much discussed. St. Chrysostom and many others have conjectured that the blind man had but little faith, since he neither found his own way to Jesus, nor pleaded his own cause, like Bartimæus. Others brought him, and interceded for him. This may be so, but since he was clearly a consenting party, we can infer little from details which constitutional timidity would explain, or helplessness (for the resources of the blind are very various), or the zeal of friends or of paid servants, or the mere eagerness of a crowd, pushing him forward in desire to see a marvel.

We cannot expect always to penetrate the motives which varied our Saviour's mode of action; it is enough that we can pretty clearly discern some principles which led to their variety. Many of them, including all the greatest, were wrought without instrumentality and without delay, showing His un-

restricted and underived power. Others were gradual, and wrought by means. These connected His "signs" with nature and the God of nature; and they could be so watched as to silence many a cavil; and they exhibited, by the very disproportion of the means, the grandeur of the Worker. In this respect the successive stages of a miracle were like the subdivisions by which a skilful architect increases the effect of a *façade* or an interior. In every case the means employed were such as to connect the result most intimately with the person as well as the will of Christ.

It must be repeated also, that the need of secondary agents shows itself, only as the increasing wilfulness of Israel separates between Christ and the people. It is as if the first rush of generous and spontaneous power had been frozen by the chill of their ingratitude.

Jesus again, as when healing the deaf and dumb, withdraws from idle curiosity. And we read, what is very impressive when we remember that any of the disciples could have been bidden to lead the blind man, that Jesus Himself drew Him by the hand out of the village. What would have been affectation in other cases was a graceful courtesy to the blind. And it reveals to us the hearty human benignity and condescension of Him Whom to see was to see the Father, that He should have clasped in His helpful hand the hand of a blind suppliant for His grace. Moistening his eyes from His own lips, and laying His hands upon him, so as to convey the utmost assurance of power actually exerted, He asked, Seest thou aught?

The answer is very striking: it is such as the knowledge of that day could scarcely have imagined; and yet it is in the closest accord with later scientific discovery. What we call the act of vision is really a

two-fold process; there is in it the report of the nerves to the brain, and also an inference, drawn by the mind, which previous experience has educated to understand what that report implies. For want of such experience, an infant thinks the moon as near him as the lamp, and reaches out for it. And when Christian science does its Master's work by opening the eyes of men who have been born blind, they do not know at first what appearances belong to globes and what to flat and square objects. It is certain that every image conveyed to the brain reaches it upside down, and is corrected there. When Jesus then restored a blind man to the perfect enjoyment of effective intelligent vision, He wrought a double miracle; one which instructed the intelligence of the blind man as well as opened his eyes. This was utterly unknown to that age. But the scepticism of our century would complain that to open the eyes was not enough, and that such a miracle would have left the man perplexed; and it would refuse to accept narratives which took no account of this difficulty, but that the cavil is anticipated. The miracle now before us refutes it in advance, for it recognises, what no spectator and no early reader of the marvel could have understood, the middle stage, when sight is gained but is still uncomprehended and ineffective. The process is shown as well as the completed work. Only by their motion could he at first distinguish living creatures from lifeless things of far greater bulk. "He looked up," (mark this picturesque detail,) "and said, I see men; for I behold them as trees, walking."

But Jesus leaves no unfinished work: "Then again laid He His hands upon his eyes, and he looked stedfastly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly."

In this narrative there is a deep significance. That

vision, forfeited until grace restores it, by which we look at the things which are not seen, is not always quite restored at once. We are conscious of great perplexity, obscurity and confusion. But a real work of Christ may have begun amid much that is imperfect, much that is even erroneous. And the path of the just is often a haze and twilight at the first, yet is its light real, and one that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

THE CONFESSION AND THE WARNING.

"And Jesus went forth, and His disciples, into the villages of Cæsarea Philippi: and in the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Who do men say that I am? And they told Him, saying, John the Baptist: and others, Elijah; but others, One of the prophets. And He asked them, But Who say ye that I am? Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ. And He charged them that they should tell no man of Him. And He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He spake the saying openly."—MARK viii. 27–32 (R.V.).

We have now reached an important stage in the Gospel narrative, the comparative withdrawal from evangelistic effort, and the preparation of the disciples for an approaching tragedy. We find them in the wild country to the north of the Lake of Galilee, and even as far withdrawn as to the neighbourhood of the sources of the Jordan. Not without a deliberate intention has Jesus led them thither. He wishes them to realise their separation. He will fix upon their consciousness the failure of the world to comprehend Him, and give them the opportunity either to acknowledge Him, or sink back to the lower level of the crowd

This is what interests St. Mark; and it is worthy of

notice that he, the friend of Peter, mentions not the special honour bestowed upon him by Christ, nor the first utterance of the memorable words "My Church."

"Who do men say that I am?" Jesus asked. The answer would tell of acceptance or rejection, the success or failure of His ministry, regarded in itself, and apart from ultimate issues unknown to mortals. From this point of view it had very plainly failed. At the beginning there was a clear hope that this was He that should come, the Son of David, the Holy One of God. But now the pitch of men's expectation was lowered. Some said, John the Baptist, risen from the dead, as Herod feared; others spoke of Elijah, who was to come before the great and notable day of the Lord; in the sadness of His later days some had begun to see a resemblance to Jeremiah, lamenting the ruin of his nation; and others fancied a resemblance to various of the prophets. Beyond this the apostles confessed that men were not known to go. Their enthusiasm had cooled, almost as rapidly as in the triumphal procession, where they who blessed both Him, and "the kingdom that cometh," no sooner felt the chill of contact with the priestly faction, than their confession dwindled into "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth." "But Who say ye that I am?" He added; and it depended on the answer whether or not there should prove to be any solid foundation, any rock, on which to build His Church. Much difference, much error may be tolerated there, but on one subject there must be no hesitation. To make Him only a prophet among others, to honour Him even as the first among the teachers of mankind, is to empty His life of its meaning, His death of its efficacy, and His Church of its authority. And yet the danger was real,

as we may see by the fervent blessing (unrecorded in our Gospel) which the right answer won. For it was no longer the bright morning of His career, when all bare Him witness and wondered; the noon was over now, and the evening shadows were heavy and lowering. To confess Him then was to have learned what flesh and blood could not reveal.

But Peter did not hesitate. In answer to the question, "Who say *ye*? Is your judgment like the the world's?" He does not reply, "We believe, we say," but with all the vigour of a mind at rest, "Thou art the Christ;" that is not even a subject of discussion: the fact is so.

Here one pauses to admire the spirit of the disciples, so unjustly treated in popular exposition because they were but human, because there were dangers which could appal them, and because the course of providence was designed to teach them how weak is the loftiest human virtue. Nevertheless, they could part company with all they had been taught to reverence and with the unanimous opinion of their native land, they could watch the slow fading out of public enthusiasm, and continue faithful, because they knew and revered the Divine life, and the glory which was hidden from the wise and prudent.

The confession of Peter is variously stated in the Gospels. St. Matthew wrote for Jews, familiar with the notion of a merely human Christ, and St. Luke for mixed Churches. Therefore the first Gospel gives the explicit avowal not only of Messiahship, but of divinity; and the third Gospel implies this. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"—"the Christ of God." But St. Mark wrote for Gentiles, whose first and only notion of the Messiah was derived

from Christian sources, and steeped in Christian attributes, so that, for their intelligence, all the great avowal was implied in the title itself, Thou art the Christ. Yet it is instructive to see men insisting on the difference, and even exaggerating it, who know that this Gospel opens with an assertion of the Divine sonship of Jesus, and whose theory is that its author worked with the Gospel of St. Matthew before his eyes. How then, or why, do they suppose the confession to have been weakened?

This foundation of His Church being secured, His Divine Messiahship being confessed in the face of an unbelieving world, Jesus lost no time in leading His apostles forward. They were forbidden to tell any man of Him: the vain hope was to be absolutely suppressed of winning the people to confess their king. The effort would only make it harder for themselves to accept that stern truth which they were now to learn, that His matchless royalty was to be won by matchless suffering. Never hitherto had Jesus proclaimed this truth, as He now did, in so many words. It had been, indeed, the secret spring of many of His sayings; and we ought to mark what loving ingenuity was lavished upon the task of gradually preparing them for the dread shock of this announcement. The Bridegroom was to be taken away from them, and then they should fast. The temple of His body should be destroyed, and in three days reared again. The blood of all the slaughtered prophets was to come upon this generation. It should suffice them when persecuted unto death, that the disciple was as His Master. It was still a plainer intimation when He said, that to follow Him was to take up a cross. His flesh was promised to them for meat and His blood

for drink. (Chap. ii. 20; John ii. 19; Luke xi. 50; Matt. x. 21, 25; 38; John vi. 54.) Such intimations Jesus had already given them, and doubtless many a cold shadow, many a dire misgiving had crept over their sunny hopes. But these it had been possible to explain away, and the effort, the attitude of mental antagonism thus forced upon them, would make the grief more bitter, the gloom more deadly, when Jesus spoke openly the saying, thenceforth so frequently repeated, that He must suffer keenly, be rejected formally by the chiefs of His creed and nation, and be killed. When He recurs to the subject (ix. 31), He adds the horror of being "delivered into the hands of men." In the tenth chapter we find Him setting His face toward the city outside which a prophet could not perish, with such fixed purpose and awful consecration in His bearing that His followers were amazed and afraid. And then He reveals the complicity of the Gentiles, who shall mock and spit upon and scourge and kill Him.

But in every case, without exception, He announced that on the third day He should arise again. For neither was He Himself sustained by a sullen and stoical submission to the worst, nor did He seek so to instruct His followers. It was for the joy that was set before Him that He endured the cross. And all the faithful who suffer with Him shall also reign together with Him, and are instructed to press toward the mark for the prize of their high calling. For we are saved by hope.

But now, contrast with the utmost courage of the martyrs, who braved the worst, when it emerged at the last suddenly from the veil which mercifully hides our future, and which hope can always gild with

starry pictures, this courage that looked steadily forward, disguising nothing, hoping for no escape, living through all the agony so long before it came, seeing His wounds in the breaking of bread, and His blood when wine was poured. Consider how marvellous was the love, which met with no real sympathy, nor even comprehension, as He spoke such dreadful words, and forced Himself to repeat what must have shaken the barb He carried in His heart, that by-and-by His followers might be somewhat helped by remembering that He had told them.

And yet again, consider how immediately the doctrine of His suffering follows upon the confession of His Christhood, and judge whether the crucifixion was merely a painful incident, the sad close of a noble life and a pure ministry, or in itself a necessary and cardinal event, fraught with transcendent issues.

THE REBUKE OF PETER.

"And He spake the saying openly. And Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him." . . . "And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power."—MARK viii. 32–ix. 1 (R.V.).

THE doctrine of a suffering Messiah was strange in the time of Jesus. And to the warm-hearted apostle the announcement that his beloved Master should endure a shameful death was keenly painful. Moreover, what had just passed made it specially unwelcome then. Jesus had accepted and applauded a confession which implied all honour. He had promised to build a new Church upon a rock; and claimed, as His to give away, the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Hopes were thus excited which could not brook His stern repression;

and the career which the apostle promised himself was very unlike that defence of a lost cause, and a persecuted and martyred leader, which now threatened him. The rebuke of Jesus clearly warns Peter, that he had miscalculated his own prospect as well as that of his Lord, and that he must prepare for the burden of a cross. Above all, it is plain that Peter was intoxicated by the great position just assigned to him, and allowed himself an utterly strange freedom of interference with his Master's plans. He "took Him and began to rebuke Him," evidently drawing Him aside for the purpose, since Jesus "turned about" in order to see the disciples whom He had just addressed. Thus our narrative implies that commission of the keys to him which it omits to mention, and we learn how absurd is the infidel contention that each evangelist was ignorant of all that he did not record. Did the appeal against those gloomy forebodings of Jesus, the protest that such evil must not be, the refusal to recognise a prophecy in His fears, awaken any answer in the sinless heart? Sympathy was not there, nor approval, nor any shade of readiness to yield. But innocent human desire for escape, the love of life, horror of His fate, more intense as it vibrated in the apostle's shaken voice, these He assuredly felt. For He tells us in so many words that Peter was a stumbling-block to Him, although He, walking in the clear day, stumbled not. Jesus, let us repeat it again and again, endured not like a Stoic, deadening the natural impulses of humanity. Whatever outraged His tender and perfect nature was not less dreadful to Him than to us; it was much more so, because His sensibilities were unblunted and exquisitely strung. At every thought of what lay before Him, his soul shuddered like a rudely touched instru-

ment of most delicate structure. And it was necessary that He should throw back the temptation with indignation and even vehemence, with the rebuke of heaven set against the presumptuous rebuke of flesh, "Get thee behind Me. . . . for thou art mindful not of the things of God, but the things of men."

But what shall we say to the hard word, "Satan"? Assuredly Peter, who remained faithful to Him, did not take it for an outbreak of bitterness, an exaggerated epithet of unbridled and undisciplined resentment. The very time occupied in looking around, the "circumspection" which was shown, while it gave emphasis, removed passion from the saying.

Peter would therefore understand that Jesus heard, in his voice, the prompting of the great tempter, to whom He had once already spoken the same words. He would be warned that soft and indulgent sentiment, while seeming kind, may become the very snare of the destroyer.

And the strong word which sobered him will continue to be a warning to the end of time.

When love of ease or worldly prospects would lead us to discourage the self-devotion, and repress the zeal of any convert; when toil or liberality beyond the recognised level seems a thing to discountenance, not because it is perhaps misguided, but only because it is exceptional; when, for a brother or a son, we are tempted to prefer an easy and prosperous life rather than a fruitful but stern and even perilous course, then we are in the same danger as Peter of becoming the mouthpiece of the Evil One.

Danger and hardness are not to be chosen for their own sake; but to reject a noble vocation, because these are in the way, is to mind not the things of God but the

things of men. And yet the temptation is one from which men are never free, and which intrudes into what seems most holy. It dared to assail Jesus; and it is most perilous still, because it often speaks to us, as then to Him, through compassionate and loving lips.

But now the Lord calls to Himself all the multitude, and lays down the rule by which discipleship must to the end be regulated.

The inflexible law is, that every follower of Jesus must deny himself and take up his cross. It is not said, Let him devise some harsh and ingenious instrument of self-torture: wanton self-torture is cruelty, and is often due to the soul's readiness rather to endure any other suffering than that which God assigns. Nor is it said, Let him take up My cross, for the burden Christ bore devolves upon no other: the fight He fought is over.

But it speaks of some cross allotted, known, but not yet accepted, some lowly form of suffering, passive or active, against which nature pleads, as Jesus heard His own nature pleading when Peter spoke. In taking up this cross we must deny self, for it will refuse the dreadful burden. What it is, no man can tell his neighbour, for often what seems a fatal besetment is but a symptom and not the true disease; and the angry man's irritability, and the drunkard's resort to stimulants, are due to remorse and self-reproach for a deeper-hidden evil gnawing the spiritual life away. But the man himself knows it. Our exhortations miss the mark when we bid him reform in this direction or in that, but conscience does not err; and he well discerns the effort or the renouncement, hateful to him as the very cross itself, by which alone he can enter into life.

To him, that life seems death, the death of all for which he cares to live, being indeed the death of selfishness. But from the beginning, when God in Eden set a barrier against lawless appetite, it was announced that the seeming life of self-indulgence and of disobedience was really death. In the day when Adam ate of the forbidden fruit he surely died. And thus our Lord declared that whosoever is resolved to save his life—the life of wayward, isolated selfishness—he shall lose all its reality, the sap, the sweetness, and the glow of it. And whosoever is content to lose all this for the sake of the Great Cause, the cause of Jesus and His gospel, he shall save it.

It was thus that the great apostle was crucified with Christ, yet lived, and yet no longer he, for Christ Himself inspired in his breast a nobler and deeper life than that which he had lost, for Jesus and the gospel. The world knows, as the Church does, how much superior is self-devotion to self-indulgence, and that one crowded hour of glorious life is worth an age without a name. Its imagination is not inflamed by the picture of indolence and luxury, but by resolute and victorious effort. But it knows not how to master the rebellious senses, nor how to insure victory in the struggle, nor how to bestow upon the masses, plunged in their monotonous toils, the rapture of triumphant strife. That can only be done by revealing to them the spiritual responsibilities of life, and the beauty of His love Who calls the humblest to walk in His own sacred footsteps.

Very striking is the moderation of Jesus, Who does not refuse discipleship to self-seeking wishes but only to the self-seeking will, in which wishes have ripened into choice, nor does He demand that we should wel-

come the loss of the inferior life, but only that we should accept it. He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

And striking also is this, that He condemns not the vicious life only: not alone the man whose desires are sensual and depraved; but all who live for self. No matter how refined and artistic the personal ambitions be, to devote ourselves to them is to lose the reality of life, it is to become querulous or jealous or vain or forgetful of the claims of other men, or scornful of the crowd. Not self-culture but self-sacrifice is the vocation of the child of God.

Many people speak as if this text bade us sacrifice the present life in hope of gaining another life beyond the grave. That is apparently the common notion of saving our "souls." But Jesus used one word for the "life" renounced and gained. He spoke indeed of saving it unto life eternal, but His hearers were men who trusted that they had eternal life, not that it was a far-off aspiration (John vi. 47, 54).

And it is doubtless in the same sense, thinking of the freshness and joy which we sacrifice for worldliness, and how sadly and soon we are disillusionised, that He went on to ask, What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit His life? Or with what price shall he buy it back when he discovers his error? But that discovery is too often postponed beyond the horizon of mortality. As one desire proves futile, another catches the eye, and somewhat excites again the often baffled hope. But the day shall come when the last self-deception shall be at an end. The cross of the Son of man, that type of all noble sacrifice, shall then be replaced by the glory of His Father with the holy angels; and ignoble compromise, aware of Jesus

and His words, yet ashamed of them in a vicious and self-indulgent age, shall in turn endure His averted face. What price shall they offer then, to buy back what they have forfeited?

Men who were standing there should see the beginning of the end, the approach of the kingdom of God with power, in the fall of Jerusalem, and the removal of the Hebrew candlestick out of its place.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

"And after six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves: and He was transfigured before them: and His garments became glistering, exceeding white: so as no fuller on earth can whiten them. And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and saith to Jesus, Rabbi, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For He wist not what to answer; for they became sore afraid. And there came a cloud overshadowing them: and there came a voice out of the cloud, This is My beloved Son: hear ye Him. And suddenly looking round about, they saw no one any more, save Jesus only with themselves."—MARK ix. 2–8 (R.V.).

THE Transfiguration is an event without a parallel in all the story of our Lord. This breaking forth of unearthly splendour in a life of self-negation, this miracle wrought without suffering to be relieved or want supplied, and in which He seems to be not the Giver of Help but the Receiver of Glory, arrests our attention less by the greatness of the marvel than by its loneliness.

But if myth or legend had to do with the making of our Gospels, we should have had wonders enough which bless no suppliant, but only crown the sacred head with laurels. They are as plentiful in the false Gospels as in the later stories of Mahomed or Gautama. Can we find a sufficient difference between these

romantic tales and this memorable event—causes enough to lead up to it, and ends enough for it to serve?

An answer is hinted by the stress laid in all three narratives upon the date of the Transfiguration. It was "after six days" according to the first two. St. Luke reckons the broken portions of the first day and the last, and makes it "about eight days after these sayings." A week has passed since the solemn announcement that their Lord was journeying to a cruel death, that self pity was discordant with the things of God, that all His followers must in spirit endure the cross, that life was to be won by losing it. Of that week no action is recorded, and we may well believe that it was spent in profound searchings of heart. The thief Iscariot would more than ever be estranged. The rest would aspire and struggle and recoil, and explain away His words in such strange ways, as when they presently failed to understand what the rising again from the dead should mean (ver. 10). But in the deep heart of Jesus there was peace, the same which He bequeathed to all His followers, the perfect calm of an absolutely surrendered will. He had made the dread announcement and rejected the insidious appeal; the sacrifice was already accomplished in his inner self, and the word spoken, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. We must steadily resist the notion that the Transfiguration was required to confirm His consecration; or, after six days had passed since He bade Satan get behind Him, to complete and perfect His decision. Yet doubtless it had its meaning for Him also. Such times of more than heroic self-devotion make large demands upon the vital energies. And He whom the angels more than once sustained,

now sought refreshment in the pure air and solemn silence of the hills, and above all in communion with His Father, since we read in St. Luke that He went up to pray. Who shall say how far-reaching, how all-embracing such a prayer would be? What age, what race may not hope to have shared its intercessions, remembering how He once expressly prayed not for His immediate followers alone. But we need not doubt that now, as in the Garden, He prayed also for Himself, and for support in the approaching death-struggle. And the Twelve, so keenly tried, would be especially remembered in this season. And even among these there would be distinctions; for we know His manner, we remember that when Satan claimed to have them all, Jesus prayed especially for Peter, because his conversion would strengthen his brethren. Now this principle of benefit to all through the selection of the fittest, explains why three were chosen to be the eye-witnesses of His glory. If the others had been there, perhaps they would have been led away into millennarian day-dreams. Perhaps the worldly aspirations of Judas, thus inflamed, would have spread far. Perhaps they would have murmured against that return to common life, which St. Peter was so anxious to postpone. Perhaps even the chosen three were only saved from intoxicating and delusive hopes by the sobering knowledge that what they had seen was to remain a secret until some intervening and mysterious event. The unripeness of the others for special revelations was abundantly shown, on the morrow, by their failure to cast out a devil. It was enough that their leaders should have this grand confirmation of their faith. There was among them, henceforth, a secret fountain of encouragement and trust, amid the darkest

circumstances. The panic in which all forsook Him might have been final, but for this vision of His glory. For it is noteworthy that these three are the foremost afterwards in sincere though frail devotion : one offering to die with Him, and the others desiring to drink of His cup and to be baptized with His baptism.

While Jesus prays for them, He is Himself made the source of their revival. He had lately promised that they who willed to lose their life should find it unto life eternal. And now, in Him who had perfectly so willed, they beheld the eternal glory beaming forth, until His very garments were steeped in light. There is no need of proof that the spirit has power over the body ; the question is only of degree. Vile passions can permanently degrade human comeliness. And there is a beauty beyond that of line or colour, seen in vivid hours of emotion, on the features of a mother beside her sleeping babe, of an orator when his soul burns within him, of a martyr when his face is as the face of an angel, and often making fairer than youthful bloom the old age that has suffered long and been kind. These help us, however faintly, to believe that there is a spiritual body, and that we may yet bear the image of the heavenly. And so once, if only once, it is given to sinful men to see how a perfect spirit can illuminate its fleshly tabernacle, as a flame illuminates a lamp, and what the life is like in which self-crucifixion issues. In this hour of rapt devotion His body was steeped in the splendour which was natural to holiness, and which would never have grown dim but that the great sacrifice had still to be carried out in action. We shall best think of the glories of transfiguration not as poured over Jesus, but as a revelation from within. Moreover, while they gaze, the conquering

chiefs of the Old Testament approach the Man of Sorrows. Because the spirit of the hour is that of self-devotion, they see not Abraham, the prosperous friend of God, nor Isaiah whose burning words befit the lips that were touched by fire from an unearthly altar, but the heroic law-giver and the lion-hearted prophet, the typical champions of the ancient dispensation. Elijah had not seen death; a majestic obscurity veiled the ashes of Moses from excess of honour; yet these were not offended by the cross which tried so cruelly the faith of the apostles. They spoke of His decease, and their word seems to have lingered in the narrative as strangely appropriate to one of the speakers; it is Christ's "exodus." *

But St. Mark does not linger over this detail, nor mention the drowsiness with which they struggled; he leans all the weight of his vivid narrative upon one great fact, the evidence now given of our Lord's absolute supremacy.

For, at this juncture Peter interposed. He "answered," a phrase which points to his consciousness that he was no unconcerned bystander, that the vision was in some degree addressed to him and his companions. But he answers at random, and like a man distraught. "Lord, it is good for us to be here," as if it were not always good to be where Jesus led, even though men should bear a cross to follow Him. Intoxicated by the joy of seeing the King in His beauty, and doubtless by the revulsion of new hope in the stead of his dolorous forebodings, he proposes to linger there. He will have

* Once besides in the New Testament this phrase was applied to death. That was by St. Peter speaking of his own, when the thought of the transfiguration was floating in his mind, and its voices lingered unconsciously in his memory (2 Pet. i. 15, cf. ver. 17). The phrase, though not unclassical, is not common.

more than is granted, just as, when Jesus washed his feet, he said "not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." And if this might be, it was fitting that these superhuman personages should have tabernacles made for them. No doubt the assertion that he wist not what to say, bears specially upon this strange offer to shelter glorified bodies from the night air, and to provide for each a place of separate repose. The words are incoherent, but they are quite natural from one who has so impulsively begun to speak that now he must talk on, because he knows not how to stop. They are the words of the very Peter whose actions we know so well. As he formerly walked upon the sea, before considering how boisterous were the waves, and would soon afterwards smite with the sword, and risk himself in the High Priest's palace, without seeing his way through either adventure, exactly so in this bewildering presence he ventures into a sentence without knowing how to close it.

Now this perfect accuracy of character, so dramatic and yet so unaffected, is evidence of the truth of this great miracle. To a frank student who knows human nature, it is a very admirable evidence. To one who knows how clumsily such effects are produced by all but the greatest masters of creative literature, it is almost decisive.

In speaking thus, he has lowered his Master to the level of the others, unconscious that Moses and Elijah were only attendants upon Jesus, who have come from heaven because He is upon earth, and who speak not of their achievements but of His sufferings. If Peter knew it, the hour had struck when their work, the law of Moses and the utterances of the prophets whom Elijah represented, should cease to be the chief impulse in

religion, and without being destroyed, should be "fulfilled," and absorbed in a new system. He was there to whom Moses in the law, and the prophets bore witness, and in His presence they had no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth. Yet Peter would fain build equal tabernacles for all alike.

Now St. Luke tells us that he interposed just when they were departing, and apparently in the hope of staying them. But all the narratives convey a strong impression that his words hastened their disappearance, and decided the manner of it. For while he yet spake, as if all the vision were eclipsed on being thus misunderstood, a cloud swept over the three—bright, yet overshadowing them—and the voice of God proclaimed their Lord to be His beloved Son (not faithful only, like Moses, as a steward over the house), and bade them, instead of desiring to arrest the flight of rival teachers, hear Him.

Too often Christian souls err after the same fashion. We cling to authoritative teachers, familiar ordinances, and traditional views, good it may be, and even divinely given, as if they were not intended wholly to lead us up to Christ. And in many a spiritual eclipse, from many a cloud which the heart fears to enter, the great lesson resounds through the conscience of the believer, Hear Him!

Did the words remind Peter how he had lately begun to rebuke his Lord? Did the visible glory, the ministration of blessed spirits and the voice of God, teach him henceforth to hear and to submit? Alas, he could again contradict Jesus, and say Thou shalt never wash my feet. I never will deny Thee. And we, who wonder and blame him, as easily forget what we are taught.

Let it be observed that the miraculous and Divine Voice reveals nothing new to them. For the words, This is My beloved Son, and also their drift in raising Him above all rivalry, were involved in the recent confession of this very Peter that He was neither Elijah nor one of the prophets, but the Son of the Living God. So true is it that we may receive a truth into our creed, and even apprehend it with such vital faith as makes us "blessed," long before it grasps and subdues our nature, and saturates the obscure regions where impulse and excitement are controlled. What we all need most is not clearer and sounder views, but the bringing of our thoughts into subjection to the mind of Jesus.

THE DESCENT FROM THE MOUNT.

"And as they were coming down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, save when the Son of man should have risen again from the dead. And they kept the saying, questioning among themselves what the rising again from the dead should mean. And they asked Him, saying, The scribes say that Elijah must first come. And He said unto them, Elijah indeed cometh first, and restoreth all things: and how is it written of the Son of man, that He should suffer many things and be set at nought? But I say unto you, that Elijah is come, and they have also done unto him whatsoever they listed, even as it is written of Him."—MARK ix. 9–13 (R.V.).

In what state of mind did the apostles return from beholding the glory of the Lord, and His ministers from another world? They seem to have been excited, demonstrative, ready to blaze abroad the wonderful event which ought to put an end to all men's doubts.

They would have been bitterly disappointed, if they had prematurely exposed their experience to ridicule, cross-examination, conjectural theories, and all the controversy which reduces facts to logical form, but strips

them of their freshness and vitality. In the first age as in the nineteenth, it was possible to be witnesses for the Lord without exposing to coarse and irreverent handling all the delicate and secret experiences of the soul with Christ.

Therefore Jesus charged them that they should tell no man. Silence would force back the impression upon the depths of their own spirits, and spread its roots under the surface there.

Nor was it right to make such a startling demand upon the faith of others before public evidence had been given, enough to make scepticism blameworthy. His resurrection from the dead would suffice to unseal their lips. And the experience of all the Church has justified that decision. The resurrection is, in fact, the centre of all the miraculous narratives, the sun which keeps them in their orbit. Some of them, as isolated events, might have failed to challenge credence. But authority and sanction are given to all the rest by this great and publicly attested marvel, which has modified history, and the denial of which makes history at once untrustworthy and incoherent. When Jesus rose from the dead, the whole significance of His life and its events was deepened.

This mention of the resurrection called them away from pleasant day-dreams, by reminding them that their Master was to die. For Him there was no illusion. Coming back from the light and voices of heaven, the cross before Him was as visible as ever to His undazzled eyes, and He was still the sober and vigilant friend to warn them against false hopes. They however found means of explaining the unwelcome truth away. Various theories were discussed among them, what the rising from the dead should mean, what

should be in fact the limit to their silence. This very perplexity, and the chill upon their hopes, aided them to keep the matter close.

One hope was too strong not to be at least hinted to Jesus. They had just seen Elias. Surely they were right in expecting his interference, as the scribes had taught. Instead of a lonely road pursued by the Messiah to a painful death, should not that great prophet come as a forerunner and restore all things? How then was murderous opposition possible?

And Jesus answered that one day this should come to pass. The herald should indeed reconcile all hearts, before the great and notable day of the Lord come. But for the present time there was another question. That promise to which they clung, was it their only light upon futurity? Was not the assertion quite as plain that the Son of Man should suffer many things and be set at nought? So far was Jesus from that state of mind in which men buoy themselves up with false hope. No apparent prophecy, no splendid vision, deceived His unerring insight. And yet no despair arrested His energies for one hour.

But, He added, Elias had already been offered to this generation in vain; they had done to him as they listed. They had re-enacted what history recorded of his life on earth.

Then a veil dropped from the disciples' eyes. They recognised the dweller in lonely places, the man of hairy garment and ascetic life, persecuted by a feeble tyrant who cowered before his rebuke, and by the deadlier hatred of an adulterous queen. They saw how the very name of Elias raised a probability that the second prophet should be treated "as it is written of" the first.

If then they had so strangely misjudged the preparation of His way, what might they not apprehend of the issue? So should also the Son of man suffer of them.

Do we wonder that they had not hitherto recognised the prophet? Perhaps, when all is made clear at last, we shall wonder more at our own refusals of reverence, our blindness to the meaning of noble lives, our moderate and qualified respect for men of whom the world is not worthy.

How much solid greatness would some of us overlook, if it went with an unpolished and unattractive exterior? Now the Baptist was a rude and abrupt person, of little culture, unwelcome in kings' houses. Yet no greater had been born of woman.

THE DEMONIAC BOY.

"And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great multitude about them, and scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the multitude, when they saw Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him. And He asked them, What question ye with them? And one of the multitude answered Him, Master, I brought unto Thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever it taketh him, it dasheth him down: and he foameth, and grindeth his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they were not able. And He answered them and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you? bring him unto Me. And they brought him unto Him: and when He saw him, straightway the spirit tare him grievously; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And He asked his father, How long time is it since this hath come unto him? And he said, From a child. And oft-times it hath cast him both into the fire and into the waters, to destroy him: but if Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. And Jesus said unto him, If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth. Straightway the father of the child cried out, and said, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief. And when Jesus saw that a multitude came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

And having cried out, and torn him much, he came out: and *the child* became as one dead; insomuch that the more part said, He is dead. But Jesus took Him by the hand, and raised him up; and he arose. And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, *saying*, We could not cast it out. And He said unto them, This kind can come out by nothing, save by prayer."—MARK ix. 14-29 (R.V.).

PETER soon had striking evidence that it would not have been "good" for them to linger too long upon the mountain. And our Lord was recalled with painful abruptness from the glories of transfiguration to the scepticism of scribes, the failure and shame of disciples, and the triumph of the powers of evil.

To the Twelve He had explicitly given authority over devils, and even the Seventy, venturing by faith to cast them out, had told Him of their success with joy. But now, in the sorrow and fear of these latter days, deprived of their Master and of their own foremost three, oppressed with gloomy forebodings, and infected with the worldliness which fails to pray, the nine had striven in vain. It is the only distinct repulse recorded, and the scribes attacked them keenly. Where was their Master at this crisis? Did not they profess equally to have the necessary power? Here was a test, and some failed, and the others did not present themselves. We can imagine the miserable scene, contrasting piteously with what passed on the summit of the hill. And in the centre was an agonized father and a tortured lad.

At this moment the crowds, profoundly moved, rushed to meet the Lord, and on seeing Him, became aware that failure was at an end. Perhaps the exceeding brightness lingered still upon His face; perhaps it was but the unearthly and victorious calm of His consecration, visible in His mien; what is certain is

that they were greatly amazed, and ran to Him and did homage.

Jesus at once challenged a renewal of the attack which had been too much for His apostles. "What question ye with them?" But awe has fallen upon the scribes also, and misery is left to tell its own tale. Their attack by preference upon the disciples is very natural, and it by no means stands alone. They did not ask Him, but His followers, why He ate and drank with sinners, nor whether He paid the half-shekel (Mark ii. 16; Matt. xvii. 24). When they did complain to the Master Himself, it was commonly of some fault in His disciples: Why do Thy disciples fast not? Why they do on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful? Why do they eat with defiled hands? (Mark ii. 18, 24; vii. 5). Their censures of Himself were usually muttered or silent murmurings, which He discerned, as when He forgave the sins of the palsied man; when the Pharisee marvelled that He had not washed His hands; when He accepted the homage of the sinful woman, and again when He spoke her pardon (Mark ii. 8; Luke xi. 38; vii. 39-49). When He healed the woman whom a spirit of infirmity had bent down for eighteen years, the ruler of the synagogue spoke to the people, without venturing to address Jesus. (Luke xiii. 14).

It is important to observe such indications, unobtrusive, and related by various evangelists, of the majesty and impressiveness which surrounded our Lord, and awed even His bitter foes.

The silence is broken by an unhappy father, who had been the centre of the group, but whom the abrupt movement to meet Jesus has merged in the crowd again. The case of his son is among those which prove that

demoniacal possession did not imply the exceptional guilt of its victims, for though still young, he has suffered long. The demon which afflicts him is dumb; it works in the guise of epilepsy, and as a disease it is affected by the changes of the moon; a malicious design is visible in frequent falls into fire and water, to destroy him. The father had sought Jesus with him, and since He was absent had appealed to His followers, but in vain. Some consequent injury to his own faith, clearly implied in what follows, may possibly be detected already, in the absence of any further petition, and in the cold epithet, "Teacher," which he employs.

Even as an evidence the answer of Jesus is remarkable, being such as human ingenuity would not have invented, nor the legendary spirit have conceived. It would have seemed natural that He should hasten to vindicate His claims and expose the folly of the scribes, or else have reproached His followers for the failure which had compromised Him.

But the scribes were entirely set aside from the moment when the Good Physician was invoked by a bleeding heart. Yet the physical trouble is dealt with deliberately, not in haste, as by one whose mastery is assured. The passing shadow which has fallen on His cause only concerns Him as a part of the heavy spiritual burden which oppresses Him, which this terrible scene so vividly exhibits.

For the true importance of His words is this, that they reveal sufferings which are too often forgotten, and which few are pure enough even to comprehend. The prevalent evil weighed upon Him. And here the visible power of Satan, the hostility of the scribes, the failure of His own, the suspense and agitation of the crowd, all breathed the spirit of that evil age, alien and harsh

to Him as an infected atmosphere. He blames none more than others; it is the "generation," so faithless and perverse, which forces Him to exclaim: "How long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you?" It is the cry of the pain of Jesus. It bids us to consider Him Who endured such contradiction of sinners, who were even sinners against Himself. So that the distress of Jesus was not that of a mere eye-witness of evil or sufferer by it. His priesthood established a closer and more agonizing connection between our Lord and the sins which tortured Him.

Do the words startle us, with the suggestion of a limit to the forbearance of Jesus, well-nigh reached? There *was* such a limit. The work of His messenger had been required, lest His coming should be to smite the world. His mind was the mind of God, and it is written, Kiss the Son, lest He be angry.

Now if Jesus looked forward to shame and anguish with natural shrinking, we here perceive another aspect in which His coming Baptism of Blood was viewed, and we discover why He was straitened until it was accomplished. There is an intimate connection between this verse and His saying in St. John, "If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I go unto My Father."

But swiftly the mind of Jesus recurs to the misery which awaits help; and He bids them bring the child to Him. Now the sweet influence of His presence would have soothed and mitigated any mere disease. It is to such influence that sceptical writers are wont to turn for an explanation, such as it is, of the works He wrought. But it was the reverse in cases of possession. There a wild sense of antagonism and revolt was wont to show itself. And we might learn that this was something more than epilepsy, even were it left doubtful

otherwise, by the outburst of Satanic rage. When he saw Him, straightway the spirit convulsed him grievously, and he fell wallowing and foaming.

Yet Jesus is neither hurried nor agitated. In not one of His miracles does precipitation, or mere impulse, mingle with His grave and self-contained compassion. He will question the scribes while the man with a withered hand awaits His help. He will rebuke the disciples before quelling the storm. At Nain He will touch the bier and arrest the bearers. When He feeds the multitude, He will first command a search for loaves. He will stand still and call Bartimæus to Him. He will evoke, even by seeming harshness, the faith of the woman of Canaan. He will have the stone rolled away from the sepulchre of Lazarus. When He Himself rises, the grave-clothes are found folded up, and the napkin which bound His head laid in a place by itself, the last tribute of mortals to His mortality not being flung contemptuously aside. All His miracles are authenticated by the stamp of the same character—serene, not in haste nor tardy, since He saw the end from the beginning. In this case delay is necessary, to arouse the father, if only by interrogation, from his dull disappointment and hopelessness. He asks therefore "How long time is it since this came upon him?" and the answer shows that he was now at least a stripling, for he had suffered ever since he was a child. Then the unhappy man is swept away by his emotions: as he tells their sorrows, and thinks what a wretched life or miserable death lies before his son, he bursts into a passionate appeal. If Thou canst do anything, do this. Let pity for such misery, for the misery of father as well as child, evoke all Thy power to save. The form is more disrespectful than the substance of his cry; its

very vehemence is evidence that some hope is working in his breast; and there is more real trust in its wild urgency than in many a reverential and carefully weighed prayer.

Yet how much rashness, self-assertion, and wilfulness (which is really unbelief) were mingled with his germinant faith and needed rebuke. Therefore Christ responded with his own word: "If *thou* canst: thou sayest it to Me, but I retort the condition upon thyself: with thee are indeed the issues of thine own application, for all things are possible to him that believeth."

This answer is in two respects important. There was a time when popular religion dealt too much with internal experience and attainment. But perhaps there are schools among us now which verge upon the opposite extreme. Faith and love are generally strongest when they forget themselves, and do not say "I am faithful and loving," but "Christ is trustworthy, Christ is adorable." This is true, and these virtues are becoming artificial, and so false, as soon as they grow self-complacent. Yet we should give at least enough attention to our own attainments to warn us of our deficiencies. And wherever we find a want of blessedness, we may seek for the reason within ourselves. Many a one is led to doubt whether Christ "can do anything" practical for him, since private prayer and public ordinances help him little, and his temptations continue to prevail, whose true need is to be roused up sharply to the consciousness that it is not Christ who has failed; it is he himself: his faith is dim, his grasp on his Lord is half hearted, he is straitened in his own affections. Our personal experiences should never teach us confidence, but they may often serve to humble and warn us.

This answer also impresses upon us the dignity of Him who speaks. Failure had already come through the spiritual defects of His disciples, but for Him, though "meek and lowly of heart," no such danger is even contemplated. No appeal to Him can be frustrated except through fault of the suppliant, since all things are possible to him that believeth.

Now faith is in itself nothing, and may even be pernicious; all its effect depends upon the object. Trust reposed in a friend avails or misleads according to his love and his resources; trust in a traitor is ruinous, and ruinous in proportion to its energy. And since trust in Jesus is omnipotent, Who and what is He?

The word pierces like a two-edged sword, and reveals to the agitated father the conflict, the impurity of his heart. Unbelief is there, and of himself he cannot conquer it. Yet is he not entirely unbelieving, else what drew him thither? What impulse led to that passionate recital of his griefs, that over-daring cry of anguish? And what is now this burning sense within him of a great and inspiring Presence, which urges him to a bolder appeal for a miracle yet more spiritual and Divine, a cry well directed to the Author and Finisher of our faith? Never was medicine better justified by its operation upon disease, than the treatment which converted a too-importunate clamour for bodily relief into a contrite prayer for grace. "I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." The same sense of mixed imperfect and yet real trust should exist in every one of us, or else our belief being perfect should be irresistible in the moral sphere, and in the physical world so resigned, so confident in the Love which governs, as never to be conscious of any gnawing importunate desire. And from the same sense of need, the same cry for help should spring.

Miraculous legends have gathered around the lives of many good and gracious men within Christendom and outside it. But they cannot claim to weigh against the history of Jesus, until at least one example can be produced of such direct spiritual action, so profound, penetrating and effectual, inextricably interwoven in the tissue of any fable.

All this time the agitation of the people had increased. A multitude was rushing forward, whose excitement would do more to distract the father's mind than further delay to help him. And Jesus, even in the midst of His treatment of souls, was not blind to such practical considerations, or to the influence of circumstances. Unlike modern dealers in sensation, He can never be shown to have aimed at religious excitement, while it was His custom to discourage it. Therefore He now rebuked the unclean spirit in the lad, addressing it directly speaking as a superior. "Thou deaf and dumb spirit, I command thee, come out of him," and adding, with explicitness which was due perhaps to the obstinate ferocity of "this kind," or perhaps was intended to help the father's lingering unbelief, "enter no more into him." The evil being obeys, yet proves his reluctance by screaming and convulsing his victim for the last time, so that he, though healed, lies utterly prostrate, and "the more part said, He is dead." It was a fearful exhibition of the disappointed malice of the pit. But it only calls forth another display of the power and love of Jesus, Who will not leave the sufferer to a gradual recovery, nor speak, as to the fiend, in words of mere authority, but reaches forth His benign hand, and raises him, restored. Here we discover the same heart which provided that the daughter of Jairus should have food, and delivered her

son to the widow of Nain, and was first to remind others that Lazarus was encumbered by his grave-clothes. The good works of Jesus were not melodramatic marvels for stage effect: they were the natural acts of supernatural power and love.

JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES.

"And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, *saying*, We could not cast it out. And He said unto them, This kind can come out by nothing, save by prayer. And they went forth from thence, and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it. For He taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and when He is killed, after three days He shall rise again. But they understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask Him. And they came to Capernaum: and when He was in the house He asked them, What were ye reasoning in the way? But they held their peace: for they had disputed one with another in the way, who was the greatest. And He sat down, and called the twelve; and He saith unto them, If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and minister of all. And He took a little child, and set him in the midst of them: and taking him in His arms, He said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such little children in My name, receiveth Me; and whosoever receiveth Me, receiveth not Me but Him that sent Me."—MARK ix. 28–37 (R.V.).

WHEN the apostles had failed to expel the demon from the child, they gave a very natural expression to their disappointment. Waiting until Jesus was in private and in the house, they said, "We for our parts were unable to cast it out." They take no blame to themselves. The tone is rather of perplexity and complaint because the commission formerly received had not held good. And it implies the question which is plainly expressed by St. Matthew, Why could we not cast it out? Their very unconsciousness of personal blame is ominous, and Jesus replies that the fault is entirely their own. They ought to have stimulated, as He did

afterwards, what was flagging but not absent in the father, what their failure must have daunted further in him. Want of faith had overcome them, says the fuller account: the brief statement in St. Mark is, "This kind (of demon) can come out by nothing but by prayer"; to which fasting was added as a second condition by ancient copyists, but without authority. What is important is to observe the connection between faith and prayer; so that while the devil would only have gone out if they had prayed, or even perhaps only if they had been men of prayer, yet their failure was through unbelief. It plainly follows that prayer is the nurse of faith, and would have strengthened it so that it should prevail. Only in habitual communion with God can we learn to trust Him aright. There, as we feel His nearness, as we are reminded that He bends to hear our cry, as the sense of eternal and perfect power blends with that of immeasurable love, and His sympathy becomes a realized abiding fact, as our vainglory is rebuked by confessions of sin, and of dependence, it is made possible for man to wield the forces of the spiritual world and yet not to be intoxicated with pride. The nearness of God is inconsistent with boastfulness of man. For want of this, it was better that the apostles should fail and be humbled, than succeed and be puffed up.

There are promises still unenjoyed, dormant and unexercised powers at the disposal of the Church to-day. If in many Christian families the children are not practically holy, if purity and consecration are not leavening our Christian land, where after so many centuries license is but little abashed and the faith of Jesus is still disputed, if the heathen are not yet given for our Lord's inheritance nor the uttermost

parts of the earth for His possession—why are we unable to cast out the devils that afflict our race? It is because our efforts are so faithless. And this again is because they are not inspired and elevated by sufficient communion with our God in prayer.

Further evidences continued to be given of the dangerous state of the mind of His followers, weighed down by earthly hopes and fears, wanting in faith and prayer, and therefore open to the sinister influences of the thief who was soon to become the traitor. They were now moving for the last time through Galilee. It was a different procession from those glad circuits, not long before, when enthusiasm everywhere rose high, and sometimes the people would have crowned Him. Now He would not that any man should know it. The word which tells of His journey seems to imply that He avoided the main thoroughfares, and went by less frequented by-ways. Partly no doubt His motives were prudential, resulting from the treachery which He discerned. Partly it was because His own spirit was heavily weighed upon, and retirement was what He needed most. And certainly most of all because crowds and tumult would have utterly unfitted the apostles to learn the hard lesson, how vain their daydreams were, and what a trial lay before their Master.

We read that "He taught them" this, which implies more than a single utterance, as also perhaps does the remarkable phrase in St. Luke, "Let these sayings sink into your ears." When the warning is examined, we find it almost a repetition of what they had heard after Peter's great confession. Then they had apparently supposed the cross of their Lord to be such a figurative one as all His followers have to bear. Even after the

Transfiguration, the chosen three had searched for a meaning for the resurrection from the dead. But now, when the words were repeated with a naked, crude, resolute distinctness, marvellous from the lips of Him Who should endure the reality, and evidently chosen in order to beat down their lingering evasive hopes, when He says "They shall kill Him, and when He is killed, after three days He shall rise again," surely they ought to have understood.

In fact they comprehended enough to shrink from hearing more. They did not dare to lift the veil which covered a mystery so dreadful; they feared to ask Him. It is a natural impulse, not to know the worst. Insolvent tradesmen leave their books unbalanced. The course of history would have run in another channel, if the great Napoleon had looked in the face the need to fortify his own capital while plundering others. No wonder that these Galileans recoiled from searching what was the calamity which weighed so heavily upon the mighty spirit of their Master. Do not men stifle the voice of conscience, and refuse to examine themselves whether they are in the faith, in the same abject dread of knowing the facts, and looking the inevitable in the face? How few there are, who bear to think, calmly and well, of the certainties of death and judgment?

But at the appointed time, the inevitable arrived for the disciples. The only effect of their moral cowardice was that it found them unready, surprised and therefore fearful, and still worse, prepared to forsake Jesus by having already in heart drawn away from Him, by having refused to comprehend and share His sorrows. It is easy to blame them, to assume that in their place we should not have been partakers in their evil deeds,

to make little of the chosen foundation stones upon which Christ would build His New Jerusalem. But in so doing we forfeit the sobering lessons of their weakness, who failed, not because they were less than we, but because they were not more than mortal. And we who censure them are perhaps indolently refusing day by day to reflect, to comprehend the meaning of our own lives and of their tendencies, to realize a thousand warnings, less terrible only because they continue to be conditional, but claiming more attention for that very reason.

Contrast with their hesitation the noble fortitude with which Christ faced His agony. It was His, and their concern in it was secondary. Yet for their sakes He bore to speak of what they could not bear to hear. Therefore to Him there came no surprise, no sudden shock; His arrest found Him calm and reassured after the conflict in the Garden, and after all the preparation which had already gone forward through all these latter days.

One only ingredient in His cup of bitterness is now added to those which had been already mentioned: "The Son of man is delivered up into the hands of men." And this is the same which He mentioned in the Garden: "The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

It was that from which David recoiled when he said, "Let me fall into the hands of God, but let me not fall into the hands of men." Suffering has not reached its height until conscious malice designs the pang, and says, "So would we have it." Especially true was this of the most tender of all hearts. Yet this also Jesus foreknew, while He steadfastly set His face to go tov ırd Jerusalem

Faithless inability to grapple with the powers of darkness, faithless unreadiness to share the cross of Jesus, what was to be expected next? Estrangement, jealousy and ambition, the passions of the world heaving in the bosom of the Church. But while they fail to discern the spirit of Judas, the Lord discerned theirs, and asked them in the house, What were ye reasoning in the way? It was a sweet and gentle prudence, which had not corrected them publicly nor while their tempers were still ruffled, nor in the language of severe rebuke, for by the way they had not only reasoned but disputed one with another, who was the greatest.

Language of especial honour had been addressed to Peter. Three had become possessed of a remarkable secret on the Holy Mount, concerning which hints on one side, and surmises on the other, may easily have excited jealousy. The failure of the nine to cast out the devil would also, as they were not humbled, render them irritable and self-asserting.

But they held their peace. No one asserted his right to answer on behalf of all. Peter, who was so willingly their spokesman at other times, did not vindicate his boasted pre-eminence now. The claim which seemed so reasonable while they forgot Jesus, was a thing to blush for in His presence. And they, who feared to ask Him of His own sufferings, knew enough to feel the contrast between their temper, their thoughts and His. Would that we too by prayer and self-examination, more often brought our desires and ambitions into the searching light of the presence of the lowly King of kings.

The calmness of their Lord was in strange contrast with their confusion. He pressed no further His inquiry, but left them to weigh His silence in this respect

against their own. But importing by His action something deliberate and grave, He sat down and called the Twelve, and pronounced the great law of Christian rank, which is lowliness and the lowliest service. "If any man would be the first, he shall be the least of all, and the servant of all." When Kaisers and Popes ostentatiously wash the feet of paupers, they do not really serve, and therefore they exhibit no genuine lowliness. Christ does not speak of the luxurious nursing of a sentiment, but of that genuine humility which effaces itself that it may really become a servant of the rest. Nor does He prescribe this as a penance, but as the appointed way to eminence. Something similar He had already spoken, bidding men sit down in the lowest room, that the Master of the house might call them higher. But it is in the next chapter, when despite this lesson the sons of Zebedee persisted in claiming the highest places, and the indignation of the rest betrayed the very passion it resented, that Jesus fully explains how lowly service, that wholesome medicine for ambition, is the essence of the very greatness in pursuit of which men spurn it.

To the precept, which will then be more conveniently examined, Jesus now added a practical lesson of amazing beauty. In the midst of twelve rugged and unsympathetic men, the same who, despite this action, presently rebuked parents for seeking the blessing of Christ upon their babes, Jesus sets a little child. What but the grace and love which shone upon the sacred face could have prevented this little one from being utterly disconcerted? But children have a strange sensibility for love. Presently this happy child was caught up in His arms, and pressed to His bosom, and there He seems to have lain while John, possibly con-

science-stricken, asked a question and received an unexpected answer. And the silent pathetic trust of this His lamb found its way to the heart of Jesus, who presently spoke of "these little ones who believe in Me" (v. 42).

Meanwhile the child illustrated in a double sense the rule of greatness which He had laid down. So great is lowliness that Christ Himself may be found in the person of a little child. And again, so great is service, that in receiving one, even one, of the multitude of children who claim our sympathies, we receive the very Master; and in that lowly Man, who was among them as He that serveth, is manifested the very God: whoso receiveth Me receiveth not Me but Him that sent me.

OFFENCES.

"John said unto Him, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy Name: and we forbade him, because he followed not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a mighty work in My name, and be able quickly to speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is for us. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, because ye are Christ's, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. And whosoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe on Me to stumble, it were better for him if a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. And if thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire. And if thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life halt, rather than having thy two feet to be cast into hell. And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out: it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another."—MARK ix. 38–50 (R.V.).

When Jesus spoke of the blessedness of receiving in His name even a little child, the conscience of St. John

became uneasy. They had seen one casting out devils in that name, and had forbidden him, "because he followeth not us." The spirit of partizanship which these words betray is somewhat softer in St. Luke, but it exists. He reports "because he followeth not (Jesus) with us."

The behaviour of the disciples all through this period is unsatisfactory. From the time when Peter contradicted and rebuked Jesus, down to their final desertion, there is weakness at every turn. And this is a curious example of it, that immediately after having failed themselves,* they should rebuke another for doing what their Master had once declared could not possibly be an evil work. If Satan cast out Satan his house was divided against itself: if the finger of God was there no doubt the kingdom of God was come unto them.

It is interesting and natural that St. John should have introduced the question. Others were usually more forward, but that was because he was more thoughtful. Peter went first into the sepulchre; but he first, seeing what was there, believed. And it was he who said "It is the Lord," although Peter thereupon plunged into the lake to reach Him. Discerning and grave: such is the character from which his Gospel would naturally come, and it belongs to him who first discerned the rebuke to their conduct implied in the words of Jesus. He was right. The Lord answered, "Forbid him not, for there is no man which shall do a mighty work in My name, and be able quickly to speak evil of Me:" his own action would seal his lips; he would have committed himself. Now this points out a very serious view of human life, too often overlooked.

* That the event was recent is implied in the present tense: "he followeth not": "forbid him not"; the matter is still fresh.

The deed of to-day rules to-morrow; one is half enslaved by the consequences of his own free will. Let no man, hesitating between two lines of action, ask, What harm in this? what use in that? without adding, And what future actions, good or evil, may they carry in their train?

The man whom they had rebuked was at least certain to be for a time detached from the opponents of truth, silent if not remonstrant when it was assailed, diluting and enfeebling the enmity of its opponents. And so Christ laid down the principle, "He that is not against us is for us." In St. Luke the words are more plainly pointed against this party spirit, "He that is not against you is for you."

How shall we reconcile this principle with Christ's declaration elsewhere, "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth"?

It is possible to argue that there is no contradiction whatever, for both deny the existence of a neutral class, and from this it equally follows that he who is not with is against, and he who is not against is with us. But this answer only evades the difficulty, which is, that one passage reckons seeming neutrality as friendship, while the other denounces it as enmity.

A closer examination reveals a more profound reconciliation. In St. Matthew, Christ announced His own personal claim; in St. Mark He declares that His people must not share it. Towards Christ Himself, indifference is practical rejection. The manifestation of God was not made to be criticised or set aside: He loves them who love Him; He demands the hearts He died for; and to give Him less is to refuse Him the travail of His soul. Therefore He that is not with Christ is against

Him. The man who boasts that he does no harm but makes no pretence of religion, is proclaiming that one may innocently refuse Christ. And it is very noteworthy that St. Matthew's aphorism was evoked, like this, by a question about the casting out of devils. There the Pharisees had said that He cast out devils by Beelzebub. And Jesus had warned all who heard, that in such a controversy, to be indifferent was to deny him. Here, the man had himself appealed to the power of Jesus. He had passed, long ago, the stage of cool semi-contemptuous indifference. Whether he was a disciple of the Baptist, not yet entirely won, or a later convert who shrank from the loss of all things, what is plain is that he had come far on the way towards Jesus. It does not follow that he enjoyed a saving faith, for Christ will at last profess to many who cast out devils in His name, that He never knew them. But intellectual persuasion and some active reliance were there. Let them beware of crushing the germs, because they were not yet developed. Nor should the disciples suppose that loyalty to their organization, although Christ was with them, was the same as loyalty to Him. "He that is not against *you* is for you," according to St. Luke. Nay more, "He that is not against *us* is for us," according to St. Mark. But already He had spoken the stronger word, "He that is not for *Me* is against Me."

No verse has been more employed than this in sectarian controversy. And sometimes it has been pressed too far. The man whom St. John would have silenced was not spreading a rival organization; and we know how the same Apostle wrote, long afterwards, of those who did so: "If they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest how all they are not of us"

(1 John ii. 19). This was simply a doer of good without ecclesiastical sanction, and the warning of the text is against all who would use the name of discipline or of order to bridle the zeal, to curb the energies, of any Christian soul. But it is at least as often the new movement as the old organization that would silence all who follow not with it.

But the energies of Christ and His gospel can never be monopolized by any organization whatsoever. Every good gift and every perfect gift, wherever we behold it, is from Him.

All help, then, is to be welcomed; not to hinder is to speed the cause. And therefore Jesus, repeating a former saying, adds that whosoever, moved by the name of Christ, shall give His followers one cup of water, shall be rewarded. He may be and continue outside the Church; his after life may be sadly inconsistent with this one action: that is not the question; the sole condition is the genuine motive—one impulse of true respect, one flicker of loyalty, only decided enough to speed the weary ambassador with the simplest possible refreshment, should "in no wise lose its reward." Does this imply that the giver should assuredly enter heaven? Alas, no. But this it says, that every spark of fire in the smoking flax is tended, every gracious movement is answered by a gift of further grace, to employ or to abuse. Not more surely is the thirsty disciple refreshed, than the feverish worldliness of him who just attains to render this service is fanned and cooled by breezes from heaven, he becomes aware of a deeper and nobler life, he is melted and drawn towards better things. Very blessed, or very miserable is he who cannot remember the holy shame, the yearning, the sigh because he is not always thus, which followed naturally upon some

deed, small in itself perhaps, but good enough to be inconsistent with his baser self. The deepening of spiritual capacity is one exceeding great reward of every act of loyalty to Christ.

This was graciously said of a deed done to the apostles, despite their failures, rivalries, and rebukes of those who would fain speed the common cause. Not, however, because they were apostles, but "because ye are Christ's." And so was the least, so was the child who clung to Him. But if the slightest sympathy with these is thus laden with blessing, then to hinder, to cause to stumble one such little one, how terrible was that. Better to die a violent and shameful death, and never sleep in a peaceful grave.

There is a worse peril than from others. We ourselves may cause ourselves to stumble. We may pervert beyond recall things innocent, natural, all but necessary, things near and dear and useful to our daily life as are our very limbs. The loss of them may be so lasting a deprivation that we shall enter heaven maimed. But if the moral evil is irrevocably identified with the worldly good, we must renounce it.

The hand with its subtle and marvellous power may well stand for harmless accomplishments now fraught with evil suggestiveness; for innocent modes of livelihood which to relinquish means crippled helplessness, yet which have become hopelessly entangled with unjust or at least questionable ways; for the great possessions, honestly come by, which the ruler would not sell; for all endowments which we can no longer hope to consecrate, and which make one resemble the old Chaldeans, whose might was their god, who sacrificed to their net and burned incense to their drag.

And the foot, with its swiftness in boyhood, its plod-

ding walk along the pavement in maturer age, may well represent the caprices of youth so hard to curb, and also the half-mechanical habits which succeed to these, and by which manhood is ruled, often to its destruction. If the hand be capacity, resource, and possession, the foot is swift perilous impulse, and also fixed habitude, monotonous recurrence, the settled ways of the world.

Cut off hand and foot, and what is left to the mutilated trunk, the ravaged and desolated life? Desire is left; the desire of the eyes. The eyes may not touch the external world; all may now be correct in our actions and intercourse with men. But yet greed, passion, inflamed imagination may desecrate the temple of the soul. The eyes misled Eve when she saw that the fruit was good, and David on his palace roof. Before the eyes of Jesus, Satan spread his third and worst temptation. And our Lord seems to imply that this last sacrifice of the worst because the deepest evil must be made with indignant vehemence; hand and foot must be cut off, but the eye must be cast out, though life be half darkened in the process.

These latter days have invented a softer gospel, which proclaims that even the fallen err if they utterly renounce any good creature of God, which ought to be received with thanksgiving; that the duty of moderation and self-control can never be replaced by renunciation, and that distrust of any lawful enjoyment revives the Manichean heresy. Is the eye a good creature of God? May the foot be received with thanksgiving? Is the hand a source of lawful enjoyment? Yet Jesus made these the types of what must, if it has become an occasion of stumbling, be entirely cast away.

He added that in such cases the choice is between mutilation and the loss of all. It is no longer a question of the full improvement of every faculty, the doubling of all the talents, but a choice between living a life impoverished and half spoiled, and going complete to Gehenna, to the charnel valley where the refuse of Jerusalem was burned in a continual fire, and the worm of corruption never died. The expression is too metaphorical to decide such questions as that of the eternal duration of punishment, or of the nature of the suffering of the lost. The metaphors of Jesus, however, are not employed to exaggerate His meaning, but only to express it. And what He said is this: The man who cherishes one dear and excusable occasion of offence, who spares himself the keenest spiritual surgery, shall be cast forth with everything that defileth, shall be ejected with the offal of the New Jerusalem, shall suffer corruption like the transgressors of whom Isaiah first used the tremendous phrase, "their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched," shall endure at once internal and external misery, as of decomposition and of burning.

Such is the most terrible menace that ever crossed the lips into which grace was poured. And it was not addressed to the outcast or the Pharisee, but to His own. They were called to the highest life; on them the influences of the world was to be as constant and as disintegrating as that of the weather upon a mountain top. Therefore they needed solemn warning, and the counter-pressure of those awful issues known to be dependent on their stern self-discipline. They could not, He said in an obscure passage which has been greatly tampered with, they could not escape fiery suffering in some form. But the fire which tried would

preserve and bless them if they endured it; every one shall be salted with fire. But if they who ought to be the salt of the world received the grace of God in vain, if the salt have lost its saltness, the case is desperate indeed.

And since the need of this solemn warning sprang from their rivalry and partizanship, Jesus concludes with an emphatic charge to discipline and correct themselves and to beware of impeding others: to be searching in the closet, and charitable in the church: to have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.

CHAPTER X.

DIVORCE.

'And He arose from thence, and cometh into the borders of Judæa and beyond Jordan: and multitudes come together unto Him again; and, as He was wont, He taught them again. And there came unto Him Pharisees, and asked Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting Him. And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. But Jesus said unto them, For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made He them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh: so that they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. And in the house the disciples asked Him again of this matter. And He saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her: and if she herself shall put away her husband, and marry another, she committeth adultery."—MARK x. 1–12 (R.V).

IT is easy to read without emotion that Jesus arose from the scene of His last discourse, and came into the borders of Judæa beyond Jordan. But not without emotion did Jesus bid farewell to Galilee, to the home of His childhood and sequestered youth, the cradle of His Church, the centre of nearly all the love and faith He had awakened. When closer still to death, His heart reverted to Galilee, and He promised that when He was risen He would go thither before His disciples. Now He had to leave it. And we must not forget that every step He took towards Jerusalem was a deliberate

approach to His assured and anticipated cross. He was not like other brave men, who endure death when it arrives, but are sustained until the crisis by a thousand flattering hopes and undefined possibilities. Jesus knew precisely where and how He should suffer. And now, as He arose from Galilee, every step said, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.

As soon as He entered Perea beyond Jordan, multitudes came to Him again. Nor did His burdened heart repress His zeal: rather He found relief in their importunity and in His Father's business, and so, "as He was wont, He taught them again." These simple words express the rule He lived by, the patient continuance in well-doing which neither hostilities nor anxieties could chill.

Not long was He left undisturbed. The Pharisees come to Him with a question dangerous in itself, because there is no conceivable answer which will not estrange many, and especially dangerous for Jesus, because already, on the Mount, He has spoken upon this subject words at seeming variance with His free views concerning sabbath observance, fasting, and ceremonial purity. Most perilous of all was the decision they expected when given by a teacher already under suspicion, and now within reach of that Herod who had, during the lifetime of his first wife, married the wife of a living man. "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" It was a decision upon this very subject which had proved fatal to the forerunner.

But Jesus spoke out plainly. In a question and answer which are variously reported, what is clear is that He carefully distinguished between a command and a permission of Moses. Divorce had been allowed; yes, but some reason had been exacted, whatever dis-

putes might exist about its needful gravity, and deliberation had been enforced by demanding a legal document, a writing of divorcement. Thus conscience was bidden to examine its motives, and time was gained for natural relentings. But after all, Jesus declared that divorce was only a concession to their hardness of heart. Thus we learn that Old Testament institutions were not all and of necessity an expression of the Divine ideal. They were sometimes a temporary concession, meant to lead to better things; an expedient rather than a revelation.

These words contain the germ of St. Paul's doctrine that the law itself was a schoolmaster, and its function temporary.

To whatever concessions Moses had been driven, the original and unshaken design of God was that man and woman should find the permanent completion of their lives each in the other. And this is shown by three separate considerations. The first is the plan of the creation, making them male and female, and such that body and soul alike are only perfect when to each its complement is added, when the masculine element and the feminine "each fulfils defect in each . . . the two-celled heart beating with one full stroke life." Thus by anticipation Jesus condemned the tame-spirited verdict of His disciples, that since a man cannot relieve himself from a union when it proves galling, "it is not good" to marry at all. To this he distinctly answered that such an inference could not prove even tolerable, except when nature itself, or else some social wrong, or else absorbing devotion to the cause of God, virtually cancelled the original design. But already he had here shown that such prudential calculation degrades man, leaves him incomplete, traverses the design of God

Who from the beginning of the creation made them male and female. In our own days, the relation between the sexes is undergoing a social and legislative revolution. Now Christ says not a word against the equal rights of the sexes, and in more than one passage St. Paul goes near to assert it. But equality is not identity, either of vocation or capacity. This text asserts the separate and reciprocal vocation of each, and it is worthy of consideration, how far the special vocation of womanhood is consistent with loud assertion of her "separate rights."

Christ's second proof that marriage cannot be dissolved without sin is that glow of heart, that noble abandonment, in which a man leaves even father and mother for the joy of his youth and the love of his espousals. In that sacred hour, how hideous and base a wanton divorce would be felt to be. Now man is not free to live by the mean, calculating, selfish afterthought, which breathes like a frost on the bloom of his noblest impulses and aspirations. He should guide himself by the light of his highest and most generous intuitions.

And the third reason is that no man, by any possibility, can undo what marriage does. They two are one flesh; each has become part of the very existence of the other; and it is simply incredible that a union so profound, so interwoven with the very tissue of their being, should lie at the mercy of the caprice or the calculations of one or other, or of both. Such a union arises from the profoundest depths of the nature God created, not from mean cravings of that nature in its degradation; and like waters springing up from the granite underneath the soil, it may suffer stain, but it is in itself free from the contamination of the fall. Despite of monkish and of Manichean slanders, impure dreams pretending to

especial purity, God is He Who joins together man and woman in a bond which "no man," king or prelate, may without guilt dissolve.

Of what followed, St. Mark is content to tell us that in the house, the disciples pressed the question further. How far did the relaxation which Moses granted over-rule the original design? To what extent was every individual bound in actual life? And the answer, given by Jesus to guide His own people through all time, is clear and unmistakeable. The tie cannot be torn asunder without sin. The first marriage holds, until actual adultery poisons the pure life in it, and man or woman who breaks through its barriers commits adultery. The Baptist's judgment of Herod was confirmed.

So Jesus taught. Ponder well that honest unshrinking grasp of solid detail, which did not overlook the physical union whereof is one flesh, that sympathy with high and chivalrous devotion forsaking all else for its beloved one, that still more spiritual penetration which discerned a Divine purpose and a destiny in the correlation of masculine and feminine gifts, of strength and grace, of energy and gentleness, of courage and long-suffering—observe with how easy and yet firm a grasp He combines all these into one overmastering argument —remember that when He spoke, the marriage tie was being relaxed all over the ancient world, even as godless legislation is to-day relaxing it—reflect that with such relaxation came inevitably a blight upon the family, resulting in degeneracy and ruin for the nation, while every race which learned the lesson of Jesus grew strong and pure and happy—and then say whether this was only a Judæan peasant, or the Light of the World indeed.

CHRIST AND LITTLE CHILDREN.

"And they brought unto Him little children, that He should touch them: and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, He was moved with indignation, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me; forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein. And He took them in His arms, and blessed them, laying His hands upon them."—MARK x. 13–16 (R.V.).

THIS beautiful story gains new loveliness from its context. The disciples had weighed the advantages and disadvantages of marriage, and decided in their calculating selfishness, that the prohibition of divorce made it "not good for a man to marry." But Jesus had regarded the matter from quite a different position; and their saying could only be received by those to whom special reasons forbade the marriage tie. It was then that the fair blossom and opening flower of domestic life, the tenderness and winning grace of childhood, appealed to them for a softer judgment. Little children (St. Luke says "babes") were brought to Him to bless, to touch them. It was a remarkable sight. He was just departing from Perea on His last journey to Jerusalem. The nation was about to abjure its King and perish, after having invoked His blood to be not on them only, but on their children. But here were some at least of the next generation led by parents who revered Jesus, to receive His blessing. And who shall dare to limit the influence exerted by that benediction on their future lives? Is it forgotten that this very Perea was the haven of refuge for Jewish believers when the wrath fell upon their nation? Meanwhile the fresh smile of their unconscious, un-

stained, unforeboding infancy met the grave smile of the all-conscious, death-boding Man of Sorrows, as much purer as it was more profound.

But the disciples were not melted. They were occupied with grave questions. Babes could understand nothing, and therefore could receive no conscious intelligent enlightenment. What then could Jesus do for them? Many wise persons are still of quite the same opinion. No spiritual influences, they tell us, can reach the soul until the brain is capable of drawing logical distinctions. A gentle mother may breathe softness and love into a child's nature, or a harsh nurse may jar and disturb its temper, until the effects are as visible on the plastic face as is the sunshine or storm upon the bosom of a lake; but for the grace of God there is no opening yet. As if soft and loving influences are not themselves a grace of God. As if the world were given certain odds in the race, and the powers of heaven were handicapped. As if the young heart of every child were a place where sin abounds (since he is a fallen creature, with an original tendency towards evil), but where grace doth not at all abound. Such is the unlovely theory. And as long as it prevails in the Church we need not wonder at the compensating error of rationalism, denying evil where so many of us deny grace. It is the more amiable error of the two. Since then the disciples could not believe that edification was for babes, they naturally rebuked those that brought them. Alas, how often still does the beauty and innocence of childhood appeal to men in vain. And this is so, because we see not the Divine grace, "the kingdom of heaven," in these. Their weakness chafes our impatience, their simplicity irritates our worldliness, and their touching helplessness

and trustfulness do not find in us heart enough for any glad response.

In ancient times they had to pass through the fire to Moloch, and since then through other fires: to fashion when mothers leave them to the hired kindness of a nurse, to selfishness when their want appeals to our charities in vain, and to cold dogmatism, which would banish them from the baptismal font, as the disciples repelled them from the embrace of Jesus. But He was moved with indignation, and reiterated, as men do when they feel deeply, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me; forbid them not." And He added this conclusive reason, "for of such," of children and childlike men, "is the kingdom of God."

What is the meaning of this remarkable assertion? To answer aright, let us return in fancy to the morning of our days; let our flesh, and all our primitive being, come back to us as those of a little child.

We were not faultless then. The theological dogma of original sin, however unwelcome to many, is in harmony with all experience. Impatience is there, and many a childish fault; and graver evils develop as surely as life unfolds, just as weeds show themselves in summer, the germs of which were already mingled with the better seed in spring. It is plain to all observers that the weeds of human nature are latent in the early soil, that this is not pure at the beginning of each individual life. Does not our new-fangled science explain this fact by telling us that we have still in our blood the transmitted influences of our ancestors the brutes?

But Christ never meant to say that the kingdom of heaven was only for the immaculate and stainless. If converted men receive it, in spite of many a haunting

appetite and recurring lust, then the frailties of our babes shall not forbid us to believe the blessed assurance that the kingdom is also theirs.

How many hindrances to the Divine life fall away from us, as our fancy recalls our childhood. What weary and shameful memories, base hopes, tawdry splendours, envenomed pleasures, entangling associations vanish, what sins need to be confessed no longer, how much evil knowledge fades out that we never now shall quite unlearn, which haunts the memory even though the conscience be absolved from it. The days of our youth are not those evil days, when anything within us saith, My soul hath no pleasure in the ways of God.

When we ask to what especial qualities of childhood did Jesus attach so great value, two kindred attributes are distinctly indicated in Scripture.

One is humility. The previous chapter showed us a little child set in the midst of the emulous disciples, whom Christ instructed that the way to be greatest was to become like this little child, the least.

A child is not humble through affectation, it never professes nor thinks about humility. But it understands, however imperfectly, that it is beset by mysterious and perilous forces, which it neither comprehends nor can grapple with. And so are we. Therefore all its instincts and experiences teach it to submit, to seek guidance, not to put its own judgment in competition with those of its appointed guides. To them, therefore, it clings and is obedient.

Why is it not so with us? Sadly we also know the peril of self-will, the misleading power of appetite and passion, the humiliating failures which track the steps of self-assertion, the distortion of our judgments, the

feebleness of our wills, the mysteries of life and death amid which we grope in vain. Milton anticipated Sir Isaac Newton in describing the wisest

> "As children gathering pebbles on the shore."
> *Par. Reg.*, iv. 330.

And if this be so true in the natural world that its sages become as little children, how much more in those spiritual realms for which our faculties are still so infantile, and of which our experience is so rudimentary. We should all be nearer to the kingdom, or greater in it, if we felt our dependence, and like the child were content to obey our Guide and cling to Him.

The second childlike quality to which Christ attached value was readiness to receive simply. Dependence naturally results from humility. Man is proud of his independence only because he relies on his own powers; when these are paralysed, as in the sickroom or before the judge, he is willing again to become a child in the hands of a nurse or of an advocate. In the realm of the spirit these natural powers are paralysed. Learning cannot resist temptation, nor wealth expiate a sin. And therefore, in the spiritual world, we are meant to be dependent and receptive.

Christ taught, in the Sermon on the Mount, that to those who asked Him, God would give His Spirit as earthly parents give good things to their children. Here also we are taught to accept, to receive the kingdom as little children, not flattering ourselves that our own exertions can dispense with the free gift, not unwilling to become pensioners of heaven, not distrustful of the heart which grants, not finding the bounties irksome which are prompted by a Fathers'

love. What can be more charming in its gracefulness than the reception of a favour by an affectionate child. His glad and confident enjoyment are a picture of what ours might be.

Since children receive the kingdom, and are a pattern for us in doing so, it is clear that they do not possess the kingdom as a natural right, but as a gift. But since they do receive it, they must surely be capable of receiving also that sacrament which is the sign and seal of it. It is a startling position indeed which denies admission into the visible Church to those of whom is the kingdom of God. It is a position taken up only because many, who would shrink from any such avowal, half-unconsciously believe that God becomes gracious to us only when His grace is attracted by skilful movements upon our part, by conscious and well-instructed efforts, by penitence, faith and orthodoxy. But whatever soul is capable of any taint of sin must be capable of compensating influences of the Spirit, by Whom Jeremiah was sanctified, and the Baptist was filled, even before their birth into this world (Jer. i. 5; Luke i. 15). Christ Himself, in Whom dwelt bodily all the fulness of the Godhead, was not therefore incapable of the simplicity and dependence of infancy.

Having taught His disciples this great lesson, Jesus let His affections loose. He folded the children in His tender and pure embrace, and blessed them much, laying His hands on them, instead of merely touching them. He blessed them not because they were baptized. But we baptize our children, because all such have received the blessing, and are clasped in the arms of the Founder of the Church.

THE RICH INQUIRER.

"And as He was going forth into the way, there ran one to Him, and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? none is good save one, even God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honour thy father and mother. And He said unto him, Master, all these things have I observed from my youth. And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me. But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions."—MARK x. 17–22 (R.V.).

THE excitement stirred by our Lord's teaching must often have shown itself in a scene of eagerness like this which St. Mark describes so well. The Saviour is just "going forth" when one rushes to overtake Him, and kneels down to Him, full of the hope of a great discovery. He is so frank, so innocent and earnest, as to win the love of Jesus. And yet he presently goes away, not as he came, but with a gloomy forehead and a heavy heart, and doubtless with slow reluctance.

The authorities were now in such avowed opposition that to be Christ's disciple was disgraceful if not dangerous to a man of mark. Yet no fear withheld this young ruler who had so much to lose; he would not come by night, like Nicodemus before the storm had gathered which was now so dark; he openly avowed his belief in the goodness of the Master, and his own ignorance of some great secret which Jesus could reveal.

There is indeed a charming frankness in his bearing, so that we admire even his childlike assertion of his own virtues, while the heights of a nobility yet un-

attained are clearly possible for one so dissatisfied, so anxious for a higher life, so urgent in his questioning, What shall I do? What lack I yet? That is what makes the difference between the Pharisee who thanks God that he is not as other men, and this youth who has kept all the commandments, yet would fain be other than he is, and readily confesses that all is not enough, that some unknown act still awaits achievement. The goodness which thinks itself upon the summit will never toil much farther. The conscience that is really awake cannot be satisfied, but is perplexed rather and baffled by the virtues of a dutiful and well-ordered life. For a chasm ever yawns between the actual and the ideal, what we have done and what we fain would do. And a spiritual glory, undefined and perhaps undefinable, floats ever before the eyes of all men whom the god of this world has not blinded. This inquirer honestly thinks himself not far from the great attainment; he expects to reach it by some transcendant act, some great deed done, and for this he has no doubt of his own prowess, if only he were well directed. What shall I do that I may have eternal life, not of grace, but as a debt—that I may inherit it? Thus he awaits direction upon the road where heathenism and semi-heathen Christianity are still toiling, and all who would purchase the gift of God with money or toil or merit or bitterness of remorseful tears.

One easily foresees that the reply of Jesus will disappoint and humble him, but it startles us to see him pointed back to works and to the law of Moses.

Again, we observe that what this inquirer seeks he very earnestly believes Jesus to have attained. And it is no mean tribute to the spiritual elevation of our Lord, no doubtful indication that amid perils and con-

tradictions and on His road to the cross the peace of God sat visibly upon His brow, that one so pure and yet so keenly aware that his own virtue sufficed not, and that the kingdom of God was yet unattained, should kneel in the dust before the Nazarene, and beseech this good Master to reveal to him all his questioning. It was a strange request, and it was granted in an unlooked for way. The demand of the Chaldean tyrant that his forgotten dream should be interpreted was not so extravagant as this, that the defect in an unknown career should be discovered. It was upon a lofty pedestal indeed that this ruler placed our Lord.

And yet his question supplies the clue to that answer of Christ which has perplexed so many. The youth is seeking for himself a purely human merit, indigenous and underived. And the same, of course, is what he ascribes to Jesus, to Him who is so far from claiming independent human attainment, or professing to be what this youth would fain become, that He said, "The Son can do nothing of Himself. . . I can of Mine own self do nothing." The secret of His human perfection is the absolute dependence of His humanity upon God, with Whom He is one. No wonder then that He repudiates any such goodness as the ruler had in view.

The Socinian finds quite another meaning in His reply, and urges that by these words Jesus denied His Deity. There is none good but one, That is God, was a reason why He should not be called so. Jesus however does not remonstrate absolutely against being called good, but against being thus addressed from this ruler's point of view, by one who regards Him as a mere teacher and expects to earn the same title for himself. And indeed the Socinian who appeals to this text grasps a sword by the blade. For if it denied Christ's

divinity it must exactly to the same extent deny also Christ's goodness, which he admits. Now it is beyond question that Jesus differed from all the saints in the serene confidence with which He regarded the moral law, from the time when He received the baptism of repentance only that He might fulfil all righteousness, to the hour when He cried, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and although deserted, claimed God as still His God. The saints of to-day were the penitents of yesterday. But He has finished the work that was given Him to do. He knows that God hears Him always, and in Him the Prince of this world hath nothing. And yet there is none good but God. Who then is He? If this saying does not confess what is intolerable to a reverential Socinian, what Strauss and Renan shrank from insinuating, what is alien to the whole spirit of the Gospels, and assuredly far from the mind of the evangelists, then it claims all that His Church rejoices to ascribe to Christ.

Moreover Jesus does not deny even to ordinary men the possibility of being "good."

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things. Some shall hear at last the words, Well done, good and faithful servant. The children of the kingdom are good seed among the tares. Clearly His repugnance is not to the epithet, but to the spirit in which it is bestowed, to the notion that goodness can spring spontaneously from the soil of our humanity. But there is nothing here to discourage the highest aspirations of the trustful and dependent soul, who looks for more grace.

The doctrinal importance of this remarkable utterance is what most affects us, who look back through the dust of a hundred controversies But it was very

secondary at the time, and what the ruler doubtless felt most was a chill sense of repression and perhaps despair. It was indeed the death-knell of his false hopes. For if only God is good, how can any mortal inherit eternal life by a good deed? And Jesus goes on to deepen this conviction by words which find a wonderful commentary in St. Paul's doctrine of the function of the law. It was to prepare men for the gospel by a challenge, by revealing the standard of true righteousness, by saying to all who seek to earn heaven, "The man that doeth these things shall live by them." The attempt was sure to end in failure, for, "by the law is the knowledge of sin." It was exactly upon this principle that Jesus said "Keep the commandments," spiritualizing them, as St. Matthew tells us, by adding to the injunctions of the second table, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," which saying, we know, briefly comprehends them all.

But the ruler knew not how much he loved himself: his easy life had met no searching and stern demand until now, and his answer has a tone of relief, after the ominous words he had first heard. "Master," and he now drops the questionable adjective, "all these have I kept from my youth;" these never were so burdensome that he should despair; not these, he thinks, inspired that unsatisfied longing for some good thing yet undone. We pity and perhaps blame the shallow answer, and the dull perception which it betrayed. But Jesus looked on him and loved him. And well it is for us that no eyes fully discern our weakness but those which were so often filled with sympathetic tears. He sees error more keenly than the sharpest critic, but he sees earnestness too. And the love which desired all souls was attracted especially by

one who had felt from his youth up the obligation of the moral law, and had not consciously transgressed it.

This is not the teaching of those vile proverbs which declare that wild oats must be sown if one would reap good corn, and that the greater the sinner the greater will be the saint.

Nay, even religionists of the sensational school delight in the past iniquities of those they honour, not only to glorify God for their recovery, nor with the joy which is in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth, but as if these possess through their former wickedness some passport to special service now. Yet neither in Scripture nor in the history of the Church will it appear that men of licentious revolt against known laws have attained to usefulness of the highest order. The Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. The Apostle of the Gentiles was blameless as touching the righteousness of the law. And each Testament has a special promise for those who seek the Lord early, who seek His kingdom and righteousness first. The undefiled are nearest to the throne.

Now mark how endearing, how unlike the stern zeal of a propagandist, was Christ's tender and loving gaze; and hear the encouraging promise of heavenly treasure, and offer of His own companionship, which presently softened the severity of His demand; and again, when all failed, when His followers doubtless scorned the deserter, ponder the truthful and compassionate words, How hard it is!

Yet will Christ teach him how far the spirit of the law pierces, since the letter has not wrought the knowledge of sin. If he loves his neighbour as himself, let his needier neighbour receive what he most values. If he

loves God supremely, let him be content with treasure in the hands of God, and with a discipleship which shall ever reveal to him, more and more profoundly, the will of God, the true nobility of man, and the way to that eternal life he seeks.

The socialist would justify by this verse a universal confiscation. But he forgets that the spirit which seizes all is widely different from that which gives all freely: that Zacchæus retained half his goods; that Joseph of Arimathea was rich; that the property of Ananias was his own, and when he sold it the price was in his own power; that St. James warned the rich in this world only against trusting in riches instead of trusting God, who gave them all richly, for enjoyment, although not to be confided in. Soon after this Jesus accepted a feast from his friends in Bethany, and ebuked Judas who complained that a costly luxury had not been sold for the benefit of the poor. Why then is his demand now so absolute? It is simply an application of his bold universal rule, that every cause of stumbling must be sacrificed, be it innocent as hand or foot or eye. And affluent indeed would be all the charities and missions of the Church in these latter days, if the demand were obeyed in cases where it really applies, if every luxury which enervates and all pomp which intoxicates were sacrificed, if all who know that wealth is a snare to them corrected their weakness by rigorous discipline, their unfruitfulness by a sharp pruning of superfluous frondage.

The rich man neither remonstrated nor defended himself. His self-confidence gave way. He felt that what he could not persuade himself to do was a "good thing." And he who came running went away sorrowful, and with a face "lowering" like the sky

which forebodes "foul weather." That is too often the issue of such vaunting offers. Yet feeling his weakness, and neither resisting nor upbraiding the faithfulness which exposes him, doubtless he was long disquieted by new desires, a strange sense of failure and unworthiness, a clearer vision of that higher life which had already haunted his reveries. Henceforward he had no choice but to sink to a baser contentment, or else rise to a higher self-devotion. Who shall say, because he failed to decide then, that he persisted for ever in the great refusal? Yet was it a perilous and hardening experience, and it was easier henceforward to live below his ideal, when once he had turned away from Christ. Nor is there any reason to doubt that the inner circle of our Lord's immediate followers was then for ever closed against him.

WHO THEN CAN BE SAVED?

"And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished exceedingly, saying unto Him, Then who can be saved? Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God. Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."—MARK x. 23–31 (R.V.).

As the rich man turned away with the arrow in his breast, Jesus looked round about on His disciples.

The Gospels, and especially St. Mark, often mention the gaze of Jesus, and all who know the power of an intense and pure nature silently searching others, the piercing intuition, the calm judgment which sometimes looks out of holy eyes, can well understand the reason. Disappointed love was in His look, and that compassionate protest against harsh judgments which presently went on to admit that the necessary demand was hard. Some, perhaps, who had begun to scorn the ruler in his defeat, were reminded of frailties of their own, and had to ask, Shall I next be judged? And one was among them, pilfering from the bag what was intended for the poor, to whom that look of Christ must have been very terrible. Unless we remember Judas, we shall not comprehend all the fitness of the repeated and earnest warnings of Jesus against covetousness. Never was secret sin dealt with so faithfully as his.

And now Jesus, as He looks around, says, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." But the disciples were amazed. To the ancient Jew, from Abraham to Solomon, riches appeared to be a sign of the Divine favour, and if the pathetic figure of Job reminded him how much sorrow might befall the just, yet the story showed even him at the end more prosperous than at the beginning. In the time of Jesus, the chiefs of their religion were greedily using their position as a means of amassing enormous fortunes. To be told that wealth was a positive hindrance on the way to God was wonderful indeed.

When Jesus modified His utterance, it was not to correct Himself, like one who had heedlessly gone beyond His meaning. His third speech reiterated the first, declaring that a manifest and proverbial physical impossibility was not so hard as for a rich

man to enter the kingdom of God, here or hereafter. But He interposed a saying which both explained the first one and enlarged its scope. "Children" He begins, like one who pitied their inexperience and dealt gently with their perplexities, "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God." And therefore is it hard for all the rich, since they must wrestle against this temptation to trust in their possessions. It is exactly in this spirit that St. James, who quoted Jesus more than any of the later writers of Scripture, charges the rich that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God. Immediately before, Jesus had told them how alone the kingdom might be entered, even by becoming as little children; lowly, dependent, willing to receive all at the hands of a superior. Would riches help them to do this? Is it easier to pray for daily bread when one has much goods laid up for many years? Is it easier to feel that God alone can make us drink of true pleasures as of a river, when a hundred luxuries and indulgences lull us in sloth or allure us into excess? Hereupon the disciples perceived what was more alarming still, that not alone do rich men trust in riches, but all who confound possessions with satisfaction, all who dream that to have much is to be blessed, as if property were character. They were right. We may follow the guidance of Mammon beckoning from afar, with a trust as idolatrous as if we held his hand. But who could abide a principle so exacting? It was the revelation of a new danger, and they were astonished exceedingly, saying, Then who can be saved? Again Jesus looked upon them, with solemn but reassuring gaze. They had learned the secret of the new life, the natural

impossibility throwing us back in helpless appeal to the powers of the world to come. "With men it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God."

Peter, not easily nor long to be discouraged, now saw ground for hope. If the same danger existed for rich and poor, then either might be encouraged by having surmounted it, and the apostles had done what the rich man failed to do—they had left all and followed Jesus. The claim has provoked undue censure, as if too much were made out of a very trifling sacrifice, a couple of boats and a paltry trade. But the objectors have missed the point; the apostles really broke away from the service of the world when they left their nets and followed Jesus. Their world was perhaps a narrow one, but He Who reckoned two mites a greater offering than the total of the gifts of many rich casting in much, was unlikely to despise a fisherman or a publican who laid all his living upon the altar. The fault, if fault there were, lay rather in the satisfaction with which Peter contemplates their decision as now irrevocable and secure, so that nothing remained except to claim the reward, which St. Matthew tells us he very distinctly did. The young man should have had treasure in heaven: what then should they have?

But in truth, their hardest battles with worldliness lay still before them, and he who thought he stood might well take heed lest he fell. They would presently unite in censuring a woman's costly gift to Him, for Whom they professed to have surrendered all. Peter himself would shrink from his Master's side. And what a satire upon this confident claim would it have been, could the heart of Judas then and there have been revealed to them.

The answer of our Lord is sufficiently remarkable. St. Matthew tells how frankly and fully He acknowledged their collective services, and what a large reward He promised, when they should sit with Him on thrones, judging their nation. So far was that generous heart from weighing their losses in a worldly scale, or criticizing the form of a demand which was not all unreasonable.

But St. Mark lays exclusive stress upon other and sobering considerations, which also St. Matthew has recorded.

There is a certain tone of egoism in the words, "Lo, we . . . what shall we have?" And Jesus corrects this in the gentlest way, by laying down such a general rule as implies that many others will do the same, "there is no man" whose self sacrifice shall go without its reward.

Secondary and lower motives begin to mingle with the generous ardour of self-sacrifice as soon as it is careful to record its losses, and inquire about its wages. Such motives are not absolutely forbidden, but they must never push into the foremost place. The crown of glory animated and sustained St. Paul, but it was for Christ, and not for this that he suffered the loss of all things.

Jesus accordingly demands purity of motive. The sacrifice must not be for ambition, even with aspirations prolonged across the frontiers of eternity: it must be altogether "for My sake and for the gospel's sake." And here we observe once more the portentous demand of Christ's person upon His followers. They are servants of no ethical or theological system, however lofty. Christ does not regard Himself and them, as alike devoted to some cause above and external to them all. To Him they are to be consecrated, and to the gospel, which, as we have seen, is the story of His Life, Death

and Resurrection. For Him they are to break the dearest and strongest of earthly ties. He had just proclaimed how indissoluble was the marriage bond. No man should sever those whom God had joined. But St. Luke informs us that to forsake even a wife for Christ's sake, was a deed worthy of being rewarded an hundredfold. Nor does He mention any higher being in whose name the sacrifice is demanded. Now this is at least implicitly the view of His own personality, which some profess to find only in St John.

Again, there was perhaps an undertone of complaint in Peter's question, as if no compensation for all their sacrifices were hitherto bestowed. What should their compensation be? But Christ declares that losses endured for Him are abundantly repaid on earth, in this present time, and even amid the fires of persecution. Houses and lands are replaced by the consciousness of inviolable shelter and inexhaustible provision. "Whither wilt thou betake thyself to find covert?" asks the menacing cardinal; but Luther answers, "Under the heaven of God." And if dearest friends be estranged, or of necessity abandoned, then, in such times of high attainment and strong spiritual insight, membership in the Divine family is felt to be no unreal tie, and earthly relationships are well recovered in the vast fraternity of souls. Brethren, and sisters, and mothers, are thus restored an hundredfold; but although a father is also lost, we do not hear that a hundred fathers shall be given back, for in the spiritual family that place is reserved for One.

Lastly, Jesus reminded them that the race was not yet over; that many first shall be last and the last first. We know how Judas by transgression fell, and how the persecuting Saul became not a whit behind the very

chiefest apostle. But this word remains for the warning and incitement of all Christians, even unto the end of the world. There are "many" such.

Next after this warning, comes yet another prediction of His own suffering, with added circumstances of horror. Would they who were now first remain faithful? or should another take their bishopric?

With a darkening heart Judas heard, and made his choice.

[Mark x. 32-34. See Mark viii. 31, p. 219.]

CHRIST'S CUP AND BAPTISM.

"And there came near unto him James and John, the sons of Zebedee, saying unto him, Master, we would that Thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall ask of Thee. And He said unto them, What would ye I should do for you? And they said unto Him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on *Thy* left hand, in Thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto Him, We are able. And Jesus said unto them, The cup that I drink ye shall drink; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: but to sit on My right hand or on My left hand is not Mine to give: but *it is for them* for whom it hath been prepared."—Mark x. 35–40 (R.V.).

We learn from St. Matthew that Salome was associated with her sons, and was indeed the chief speaker in the earlier part of this incident.

And her request has commonly been regarded as the mean and shortsighted intrigue of an ambitious woman, recklessly snatching at an advantage for her family, and unconscious of the stern and steep road to honour in the kingdom of Jesus.

Nor can we deny that her prayer was somewhat presumptuous, or that it was especially unbecoming to aim

at entangling her Lord in a blindfold promise, desiring Him to do something undefined, "whatsoever we shall ask of Thee." Jesus was too discreet to answer otherwise than, "What would ye that I should do for you?" And when they asked for the chief seats in the glory that was yet to be their Master's, no wonder that the Ten hearing of it, had indignation. But Christ's answer, and the gentle manner in which He explains His refusal, when a sharp rebuke is what we would expect to read, alike suggest that there may have been some softening, half-justifying circumstance. And this we find in the period at which the daring request was made.

It was on the road, during the last journey, when a panic had seized the company; and our Lord, apparently out of the strong craving for sympathy which possesses the noblest souls, had once more told the Twelve what insults and cruel sufferings lay before Him. It was a time for deep searching of hearts, for the craven to go back and walk no more with Him, and for the traitor to think of making His own peace, at any price, with His Master's foes.

But this dauntless woman could see the clear sky beyond the storm. Her sons shall be loyal, and win the prize, whatever be the hazard, and however long the struggle.

Ignorant and rash she may have been, but it was no base ambition which chose such a moment to declare its unshaken ardour, and claim distinction in the kingdom for which so much must be endured.

And when the stern price was plainly stated, she and her children were not startled, they conceived themselves able for the baptism and the cup; and little as they dreamed of the coldness of the waters, and the bitterness of the draught, yet Jesus did not declare

them to be deceived. He said, Ye shall indeed share these.

Nor can we doubt that their faith and loyalty refreshed His soul amid so much that was sad and selfish. He knew indeed on what a dreadful seat He was soon to claim His kingdom, and who should sit upon His right hand and His left. These could not follow Him now, but they should follow Him hereafter — one by the brief pang of the earliest apostolic martyrdom, and the other by the longest and sorest experience of that faithless and perverse generation.

1. Very significant is the test of worth which Jesus propounds to them: not successful service but endurance; not the active but the passive graces. It is not *our* test, except in a few brilliant and conspicuous martyrdoms. The Church, like the world, has crowns for learning, eloquence, energy; it applauds the force by which great things are done. The reformer who abolishes an abuse, the scholar who defends a doctrine, the orator who sways a multitude, and the missionary who adds a new tribe to Christendom,—all these are sure of honour. Our loudest plaudits are not for simple men and women, but for high station, genius, and success. But the Lord looketh upon the heart, not the brain or the hand; He values the worker, not the work; the love, not the achievement. And, therefore, one of the tests He constantly applied was this, the capability for noble endurance. We ourselves, in our saner moments, can judge whether it demands more grace to refute a heretic, or to sustain the long inglorious agonies of some disease which slowly gnaws away the heart of life. And doubtless among the heroes for whom Christ is twining immortal garlands, there is many a pale and shattered creature, nerveless and unstrung,

tossing on a mean bed, breathing in imperfect English loftier praises than many an anthem which resounds through cathedral arches, and laying on the altar of burnt sacrifice all he has, even his poor frame itself, to be racked and tortured without a murmur. Culture has never heightened his forehead nor refined his face: we look at him, but little dream what the angels see, or how perhaps because of such an one the great places which Salome sought were not Christ's to give away except only to them for whom it was prepared. For these, at last, the reward shall be His to give, as He said, "To him that overcometh will I give to sit down with Me upon My throne."

2. Significant also are the phrases by which Christ expressed the sufferings of His people. Some, which it is possible to escape, are voluntarily accepted for Christ's sake, as when the Virgin mother bowed her head to slander and scorn, and said, "Behold the servant of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word." Such sufferings are a cup deliberately raised by one's own hand to the reluctant lips. Into other sufferings we are plunged: they are inevitable. Malice, ill-health, or bereavement plies the scourge; they come on us like the rush of billows in a storm; they are a deep and dreadful baptism. Or we may say that some woes are external, visible, we are seen to be submerged in them; but others are like the secret ingredients of a bitter draught, which the lips know, but the eye of the bystander cannot analyze. But there is One Who knows and rewards; even the Man of Sorrows Who said, The cup which My heavenly Father giveth, shall I not drink it?

Now it is this standard of excellence, announced by Jesus, which shall give high place to many of the poor

and ignorant and weak, when rank shall perish, when tongues shall cease, and when our knowledge, in the blaze of new revelations, shall utterly vanish away, not quenched, but absorbed like the starlight at noon.

3. We observe again that men are not said to drink of another cup as bitter, or to be baptized in other waters as chill, as tried their Master; but to share His very baptism and His cup. Not that we can add anything to His all-sufficient sacrifice. Our goodness extendeth not to God. But Christ's work availed not only to reconcile us to the Father, but also to elevate and consecrate sufferings which would otherwise have been penal and degrading. Accepting our sorrows in the grace of Christ, and receiving Him into our hearts, then our sufferings fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ (Col. i. 24), and at the last He will say, when the glories of heaven are as a robe around Him, "I was hungry, naked, sick, and in prison in the person of the least of these."

Hence it is that a special nearness to God has ever been felt in holy sorrow, and in the pain of hearts which, amid all clamours and tumults of the world, are hushed and calmed by the example of Him Who was led as a lamb to the slaughter.

And thus they are not wrong who speak of the Sacrament of Sorrow, for Jesus, in this passage, applies to it the language of both sacraments.

It is a harmless superstition even at the worst which brings to the baptism of many noble houses water from the stream where Jesus was baptized by John. But here we read of another and a dread baptism, consecrated by the fellowship of Christ, in depths which plummet never sounded, and into which the neophyte goes down sustained by no mortal hand.

Here is also the communion of an awful cup. No human minister sets it in our trembling hand; no human voice asks, "Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink?" Our lips grow pale, and our blood is chill; but faith responds, "We are able." And the tender and pitying voice of our Master, too loving to spare one necessary pang, responds with the word of doom: "The cup that I drink ye shall drink; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized." Even so: it is enough for the servant that he be as his Master.

THE LAW OF GREATNESS

"And when the ten heard it, they began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John. And Jesus called them to Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you: but whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all. For verily the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."—MARK x. 41-45 (R.V.).

WHEN the Ten heard that James and John had asked for the chief places in the kingdom, they proved, by their indignation, that they also nourished the same ambitious desires which they condemned. But Jesus called them to Him, for it was not there that angry passions had broken out. And happy are they who hear and obey His summons to approach, when, removed from His purifying gaze by carelessness or wilfulness, ambition and anger begin to excite their hearts.

NOW Jesus addressed them as being aware of their hidden emulation. And His treatment of it is remark-

able. He neither condemns, nor praises it, but simply teaches them what Christian greatness means, and the conditions on which it may be won.

The greatness of the world is measured by authority and lordliness. Even there it is an uncertain test; for the most real power is often wielded by some anonymous thinker, or by some crafty intriguer, content with the substance of authority while his puppet enjoys the trappings. Something of this may perhaps be detected in the words, "They which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them." And it is certain that "their great ones exercise authority over them." But the Divine greatness is a meek and gentle influence. To minister to the Church is better than to command it, and whoever desires to be the chief must become the servant of all. Thus shall whatever is vainglorious and egoistic in our ambition defeat itself; the more one struggles to be great the more he is disqualified: even benefits rendered to others with this object will not really be service done for them but for self; nor will any calculated assumption of humility help one to become indeed the least, being but a subtle assertion that he is great, and like the last place in an ecclesiastical procession, when occupied in a self-conscious spirit. And thus it comes to pass that the Church knows very indistinctly who are its greatest sons. As the gift of two mites by the widow was greater than that of large sums by the rich, so a small service done in the spirit of perfect self-effacement,—a service which thought neither of its merit nor of its reward, but only of a brother's need, shall be more in the day of reckoning than sacrifices which are celebrated by the historians and sung by the poets of the Church. For it may avail nothing to give all my goods to feed the poor, and my

body to be burned; while a cup of cold water, rendered by a loyal hand, shall in no wise lose its reward.

Thus Jesus throws open to all men a competition which has no charms for flesh and blood. And as He spoke of the entry upon His service, bearing a cross, as being the following of Himself, so He teaches us, that the greatness of lowliness, to which we are called, is His own greatness. "For verily the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister." Not here, not in this tarnished and faded world, would He Who was from everlasting with the Father have sought His own ease or honour. But the physician came to them that were sick, and the good Shepherd followed His lost sheep until He found it. Now this comparison proves that we also are to carry forward the same restoring work, or else we might infer that, because He came to minister to us, we may accept ministration with a good heart. It is not so. We are the light and the salt of the earth, and must suffer with Him that we may also be glorified together.

But He added another memorable phrase. He came "to give His life a ransom in exchange for many." It is not a question, therefore, of the inspiring example of His life. Something has been forfeited which must be redeemed, and Christ has paid the price. Nor is this done only on behalf of many, but in exchange for them.

So then the crucifixion is not a sad incident in a great career; it is the mark towards which Jesus moved, the power by which He redeemed the world.

Surely, we recognise here the echo of the prophet's words, "Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin . . . by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many, and He shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. liii. 10, 11).

The elaborated doctrine of the atonement may not perhaps be here, much less the subtleties of theologians who have, to their own satisfaction, known the mind of the Almighty to perfection. But it is beyond reasonable controversy that in this verse Jesus declared that His sufferings were vicarious, and endured in the sinners' stead.

BARTIMÆUS.

"And they come to Jericho: and as He went out from Jericho, with His disciples and a great multitude, the son of Timæus, Bartimæus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the way side. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and said, Call ye him. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good cheer; rise, He calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered him, and said, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And the blind man said unto Him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And straightway he received his sight, and followed Him in the way."—MARK x. 46–52 (R.V.).

THERE is no miracle in the Gospels of which the accounts are so hard to reconcile as those of the healing of the blind at Jericho.

It is a small thing that St. Matthew mentions two blind men, while St. Mark and St. Luke are only aware of one. The same is true of the demoniacs at Gadara, and it is easily understood that only an eyewitness should remember the obscure comrade of a remarkable and energetic man, who would have spread far and wide the particulars of his own cure. The fierce and dangerous demoniac of Gadara was just such a man, and there is ample evidence of energy and vehemence

in the brief account of Bartimæus. What is really perplexing is that St. Luke places the miracle at the entrance to Jericho, but St. Matthew and St. Mark, as Jesus came out of it. It is too forced and violent a theory which speaks of an old and a new town, so close together that one was entered and the other left at the same time.

It is possible that there were two events, and the success of one sufferer at the entrance to the town led others to use the same importunities at the exit. And this would not be much more remarkable than the two miracles of the loaves, or the two miraculous draughts of fish. It is also possible, though unlikely, that the same supplicant who began his appeals without success when Jesus entered, resumed His entreaties, with a comrade, at the gate by which He left.

Such difficulties exist in all the best authenticated histories : discrepancies of the kind arise continually between the evidence of the most trustworthy witnesses in courts of justice. And the student who is humble as well as devout will not shut his eyes against facts, merely because they are perplexing, but will remember that they do nothing to shake the solid narrative itself.

As we read St. Mark's account, we are struck by the vividness of the whole picture, and especially by the robust personality of the blind man. The scene is neither Jerusalem, the city of the Pharisees, nor Galilee, where they have persistently sapped the popularity of Jesus. Eastward of the Jordan, He has spent the last peaceful and successful weeks of His brief and stormy career, and Jericho lies upon the borders of that friendly district. Accordingly something is here of the old enthusiasm : a great multitude moves along with His disciples to the gates, and the rushing

concourse excites the curiosity of the blind son of Timæus. So does many a religious movement lead to inquiry and explanation far and wide. But when he, sitting by the way, and unable to follow, knows that the great Healer is at hand, but only in passing, and for a moment, his interest suddenly becomes personal and ardent, and "he began to cry out" (the expression implies that his supplication, beginning as the crowd drew near, was not one utterance but a prolonged appeal), "and to say, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." To the crowd his outcry seemed to be only an intrusion upon One Who was too rapt, too heavenly, to be disturbed by the sorrows of a blind beggar. But that was not the view of Bartimæus, whose personal affliction gave him the keenest interest in those verses of the Old Testament which spoke of opening the blind eyes. If he did not understand their exact force as prophecies, at least they satisfied him that his petition could not be an insult to the great Prophet of Whom just such actions were told, for Whose visit he had often sighed, and Who was now fast going by, perhaps for ever. The picture is one of great eagerness, bearing up against great discouragement. We catch the spirit of the man as he inquires what the multitude means, as the epithet of his informants, Jesus of Nazareth, changes on his lips into Jesus, Thou Son of David, as he persists, without any vision of Christ to encourage him, and amid the rebukes of many, in crying out the more a great deal, although pain is deepening every moment in his accents, and he will presently need cheering. The ear of Jesus is quick for such a call, and He stops. He does not raise His own voice to summon him, but teaches a lesson of humanity to those who would

fain have silenced the appeal of anguish, and says, Call ye him. And they obey with a courtier-like change of tone, saying, Be of good cheer, rise, He calleth thee. And Bartimæus cannot endure even the slight hindrance of his loose garment, but flings it aside, and rises and comes to Jesus, a pattern of the importunity which prays and never faints, which perseveres amid all discouragement, which adverse public opinion cannot hinder. And the Lord asks of him almost exactly the same question as recently of James and John, What wilt thou that I should do for thee? But in his reply there is no aspiring pride: misery knows how precious are the common gifts, the every-day blessings which we hardly pause to think about; and he replies, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight. It is a glad and eager answer. Many a petition he had urged in vain; and many a small favour had been discourteously bestowed; but Jesus, Whose tenderness loves to commend while He blesses, shares with him, so to speak, the glory of his healing, as He answers, Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole. By thus fixing his attention upon his own part in the miracle, so utterly worthless as a contribution, but so indispensable as a condition, Jesus taught him to exercise hereafter the same gift of faith.

"Go thy way," He said. And Bartimæus "followed Him on the road." Happy is that man whose eyes are open to discern, and his heart prompt to follow, the print of those holy feet.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRIUMPHANT ENTRY.

"And when they draw nigh unto Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sendeth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go your way into the village that is over against you: and straightway as ye enter into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon no man ever yet sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any one say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye, The Lord hath need of him; and straightway He will send him back hither. And they went away, and found a colt tied at the door without in the open street; and they loose him. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had said: and they let them go. And they bring the colt unto Jesus, and cast on him their garments; and He sat upon him. And many spread their garments upon the way; and others branches, which they had cut from the fields. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, Hosanna: Blessed *is* He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed *is* the kingdom that cometh, *the kingdom* of our father David: Hosanna in the highest. And He entered into Jerusalem, into the temple; and when He had looked round about upon all things, it being now eventide, He went out unto Bethany with the twelve."—MARK xi. 1-11 (R.V.).

JESUS had now come near to Jerusalem, into what was possibly the sacred district of Bethphage, of which, in that case, Bethany was the border village. Not without pausing here (as we learn from the fourth Gospel), yet as the next step forward, He sent two of His disciples to untie and bring back an ass, which was fastened with her colt at a spot which He minutely described. Unless they were challenged they should

simply bring the animals away; but if any one remonstrated, they should answer, "The Lord hath need of them," and thereupon the owner would not only acquiesce, but send them. In fact they are to make a requisition, such as the State often institutes for horses and cattle during a campaign, when private rights must give way to a national exigency. And this masterful demand, this abrupt and decisive rejoinder to a natural objection, not arguing nor requesting, but demanding, this title which they are bidden to give to Jesus, by which, standing thus alone, He is rarely described in Scripture (chiefly in the later Epistles, when the remembrance of His earthly style gave place to the influence of habitual adoration), all this preliminary arrangement makes us conscious of a change of tone, of royalty issuing its mandates, and claiming its rights. But what a claim, what a requisition, when He takes the title of Jehovah, and yet announces His need of the colt of an ass. It is indeed the lowliest of all memorable processions which He plans, and yet, in its very humility, it appeals to ancient prophecy, and says unto Zion that her King cometh unto her. The monarchs of the East and the captains of the West might ride upon horses as for war, but the King of Ṣion should come unto her meek, and sitting upon an ass, upon a colt, the foal of an ass. Yet there is fitness and dignity in the use of "a colt whereon never man sat," and it reminds us of other facts, such as that He was the firstborn of a virgin mother, and rested in a tomb which corruption had never soiled.

Thus He comes forth, the gentlest of the mighty, with no swords gleaming around to guard Him, or to smite the foreigner who tramples Israel, or the worse foes of her own household. Men who will follow such

a King must lay aside their vain and earthly ambitions, and awake to the truth that spiritual powers are grander than any which violence ever grasped. But men who will not follow Him shall some day learn the same lesson, perhaps in the crash of their reeling commonwealth, perhaps not until the armies of heaven follow Him, as He goes forth, riding now upon a white horse, crowned with many diadems, smiting the nations with a sharp sword, and ruling them with an iron rod.

Lowly though His procession was, yet it was palpably a royal one. When Jehu was proclaimed king at Ramoth-Gilead, the captains hastened to make him sit upon the garments of every one of them, expressing by this national symbol their subjection. Somewhat the same feeling is in the famous anecdote of Sir Walter Raleigh and Queen Elizabeth. And thus the disciples who brought the ass cast on him their garments, and Jesus sat thereon, and many spread their garments in the way. Others strewed the road with branches; and as they went they cried aloud certain verses of that great song of triumph, which told how the nations, swarming like bees, were quenched like the light fire of thorns, how the right hand of the Lord did valiantly, how the gates of righteousness should be thrown open for the righteous, and, more significant still, how the stone which the builders rejected should become the head-stone of the corner. Often had Jesus quoted this saying when reproached by the unbelief of the rulers, and now the people rejoiced and were glad in it, as they sang of His salvation, saying, "Hosanna, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the Kingdom of our father David, Hosanna in the highest."

Such is the narrative as it impressed St. Mark. For

his purpose it mattered nothing that Jerusalem took no part in the rejoicings, but was perplexed, and said, Who is this? or that, when confronted by this somewhat scornful and affected ignorance of the capital, the voice of Galilee grew weak, and proclaimed no longer the advent of the kingdom of David, but only Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth; or that the Pharisees in the temple avowed their disapproval, while contemptuously ignoring the Galilean multitude, by inviting Him to reprove some children. What concerned St. Mark was that now, at last, Jesus openly and practically assumed rank as a monarch, allowed men to proclaim the advent of His kingdom, and proceeded to exercise its rights by calling for the surrender of property, and by cleansing the temple with a scourge. The same avowal of kingship is almost all that he has cared to record of the remarkable scene before His Roman judge.

After this heroic fashion did Jesus present Himself to die. Without a misleading hope, conscious of the hollowness of His seeming popularity, weeping for the impending ruin of the glorious city whose walls were ringing with His praise, and predicting the murderous triumph of the crafty faction which appears so helpless, He not only refuses to recede or compromise, but does not hesitate to advance His claims in a manner entirely new, and to defy the utmost animosity of those who still rejected Him.

After such a scene there could be no middle course between crushing Him, and bowing to Him. He was no longer a Teacher of doctrines, however revolutionary, but an Aspirant to practical authority, Who must be dealt with practically.

There was evidence also of His intention to proceed

upon this new line, when He entered into the temple, investigated its glaring abuses, and only left it for the moment because it was now eventide. To-morrow would show more of His designs.

Jesus is still, and in this world, King. And it will hereafter avail us nothing to have received His doctrine, unless we have taken His yoke.

THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

"And on the morrow, when they were come out from Bethany, He hungered. And seeing a fig-tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season of figs. And He answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit from thee henceforward for ever. And His disciples heard it."

"And as they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig-tree withered away from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto Him, Rabbi, behold, the fig-tree which Thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it. Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them. And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."—MARK xi. 12–14, 20–25 (R.V.).

No sooner has Jesus claimed His kingdom, than He performs His first and only miracle of judgment. And it is certain that no mortal, informed that such a miracle was impending, could have guessed where the blow would fall. In this miracle an element is predominant which exists in all, since it is wrought as an acted dramatized parable, not for any physical advantage, but wholly for the instruction which it conveys. Jesus hungered at the very outset of a day of toil, as

He came out from Bethany. And this was not due to poverty, since the disciples there had recently made Him a great feast, but to His own absorbing ardour. The zeal of God's house, which He had seen polluted and was about to cleanse, had either left Him indifferent to food until the keen air of morning aroused the sense of need, or else it had detained Him, all night long, in prayer and meditation out of doors. As He walks, He sees afar off a lonely fig-tree covered with leaves, and comes if haply He might find anything thereon. It is true that figs would not be in season for two months, but yet they ought to present themselves before the leaves did; and since the tree was precocious in the show and profusion of luxuriance, it ought to bear early figs. If it failed, it would at least point a powerful moral; and, therefore, when only leaves appeared upon it, Jesus cursed it with perpetual barrenness, and passed on. Not in the dusk of that evening as they returned, but when they passed by again in the morning the blight was manifest, the tree was withered from its very roots.

It is complained that by this act Jesus deprived some one of his property. But the same retributive justice of which this was an expression was preparing to blight, presently, all the possessions of all the nation. Was this unjust? And of the numberless trees that are blasted year by year, why should the loss of this one only be resented? Every physical injury must be intended to further some spiritual end; but it is not often that the purpose is so clear, and the lesson so distinctly learned.

Others blame our Lord's word of sentence, because a tree, not being a moral agent, ought not to be punished. It is an obvious rejoinder that neither could

it suffer pain; that the whole action is symbolic; and that we ourselves justify the Saviour's method of expression as often as we call one tree "good" and another "bad," and say that a third "ought" to bear fruit, while not much could be "expected of" a fourth. It should rather be observed that in this word of sentence Jesus revealed His tenderness. It would have been a false and cruel kindness never to work any miracle except of compassion, and thus to suggest the inference that He could never strike, whereas indeed, before that generation passed away, He would break His enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Yet He came not to destroy men's lives but to save them. And, therefore, while showing Himself neither indifferent nor powerless against barren and false pretensions, He did this only once, and then only by a sign wrought upon an unsentient tree.

Retribution fell upon it not for its lack of fruit, since at that season it shared this with all its tribe, but for ostentatious, much-professing fruitlessness. And thus it pointed with dread significance to the condition of God's own people, differing from Greece and Rome and Syria, not in the want of fruit, but in the show of luxuriant frondage, in the expectation it excited and mocked. When the season of the world's fruitfulness was yet remote, only Israel put forth leaves, and made professions which were not fulfilled. And the permanent warning of the miracle is not for heathen men and races, but for Christians who have a name to live, and who are called to bear fruit unto God.

While the disciples marvelled at the sudden fulfilment of its sentence, they could not have forgotten the parable of a fig-tree in the vineyard, on which care and labour were lavished, but which must be destroyed

after one year of respite if it continued to be a cumberer of the ground.

And Jesus drove the lesson home. He pointed to "this mountain" full in front, with the gold and marble of the temple sparkling like a diadem upon its brow, and declared that faith is not only able to smite barrenness with death, but to remove into the midst of the sea, to plant among the wild and stormswept races of the immeasurable pagan world, the glory and privilege of the realized presence of the Lord. To do this was the purpose of God, hinted by many a prophet, and clearly announced by Christ Himself. But its accomplishment was left to His followers, who should succeed in exact proportion to the union of their will and that of God, so that the condition of that moral miracle, transcending all others in marvel and in efficacy, was simple faith.

And the same rule covers all the exigencies of life. One who truly relies on God, whose mind and will are attuned to those of the Eternal, cannot be selfish, or vindictive, or presumptuous. As far as we rise to the grandeur of this condition we enter into the Omnipotence of God, and no limit need be imposed upon the prevalence of really and utterly believing prayer. The wishes that ought to be refused will vanish as we attain that eminence, like the hoar frost of morning as the sun grows strong.

To this promise Jesus added a precept, the admirable suitability of which is not at first apparent. Most sins are made evident to the conscience in the act of prayer. Drawing nigh to God, we feel our unfitness to be there, we are made conscious of what He frowns upon, and if we have such faith as Jesus spoke of, we at once resign what would grieve the Spirit of adoption. No

saint is ignorant of the convicting power of prayer. But it is not of necessity so with resentment for real grievances. We may think we do well to be angry. We may confound our selfish fire with the pure flame of holy zeal, and begin, with confidence enough, yet not with the mind of Christ, to remove mountains, not because they impede a holy cause, but because they throw a shadow upon our own field. And, therefore, Jesus reminds us that not only wonder-working faith, but even the forgiveness of our sins requires from us the forgiveness of our brother. This saying is the clearest proof of how much is implied in a truly undoubting heart. And this promise is the sternest rebuke of the Church, endorsed with such ample powers, and yet after nineteen centuries confronted by an unconverted world.

THE SECOND CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE.

"And they come to Jerusalem: and He entered into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and them that bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold the doves; and He would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple. And He taught, and said unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers. And the chief priests and the scribes heard it, and sought how they might destroy Him: for they feared Him, for all the multitude was astonished at His teaching. And every evening He went forth out of the city."—MARK xi. 15–19. (R.V.).

WITH the authority of yesterday's triumph still about Him, Jesus returned to the temple, which He had then inspected. There at least the priesthood were not thwarted by popular indifference or ignorance: they had power to carry out fully their own views; they were solely responsible for whatever abuses could be discovered. In fact, the iniquities which moved the

indignation of Jesus were of their own contrivance, and they enriched themselves by a vile trade which robbed the worshippers and profaned the holy house.

Pilgrims from a distance needed the sacred money, the half-shekel of the sanctuary, still coined for this one purpose, to offer for a ransom of their souls (Exod. xxx. 13). And the priests had sanctioned a trade in the exchange of money under the temple roof, so fraudulent that the dealers' evidence was refused in the courts of justice.

Doves were necessary for the purification of the poor, who could not afford more costly sacrifices, and sheep and oxen were also in great demand. And since the unblemished quality of the sacrifices should be attested by the priests, they had been able to put a fictitious value upon these animals, by which the family of Annas in particular had accumulated enormous wealth.

To facilitate this trade, they had dared to bring the defilement of the cattle market within the precincts of the House of God. Not indeed into the place where the Pharisee stood in his pride and "prayed with himself," for that was holy; but the court of the Gentiles was profane; the din which distracted and the foulness which revolted Gentile worship was of no account to the average Jew. But Jesus regarded the scene with different eyes. How could the sanctity of that holy place not extend to the court of the stranger and the proselyte, when it was written, Thy house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? Therefore Jesus had already, at the outset of His ministry, cleansed His Father's house. Now, in the fulness of His newly asserted royalty, He calls it My House: He denounces the iniquity of their traffic by branding it as a den of robbers; He casts out the traders themselves, as well

as the implements of their traffic; and in so doing He fanned to a mortal heat the hatred of the chief priests and the scribes, who saw at once their revenues threatened and their reputation tarnished, and yet dared not strike, because all the multitude was astonished at His teaching.

But the wisdom of Jesus did not leave Him within their reach at night; every evening He went forth out of the city.

From this narrative we learn the blinding force of self-interest, for doubtless they were no more sensible of their iniquity than many a modern slavedealer. And we must never rest content because our own conscience acquits us, unless we have by thought and prayer supplied it with light and guiding.

We learn reverence for sacred places, since the one exercise of His royal authority which Jesus publicly displayed was to cleanse the temple, even though upon the morrow He would relinquish it for ever, to be "your house"—and desolate.

We learn also how much apparent sanctity, what dignity of worship, splendour of offerings, and pomp of architecture may go along with corruption and unreality.

And yet again, by their overawed and abject helplessness we learn the might of holy indignation, and the awakening power of a bold appeal to conscience. "The people hung upon Him, listening," and if all seemed vain and wasted effort on the following Friday, what fruit of the teaching of Jesus did not His followers gather in, as soon as He poured down on them the gifts of Pentecost.

Did they now recall their own reflections after the earlier cleansing of the temple? and their Master's

ominous words? They had then remembered how it was written, The zeal of thine house shall eat Me up. And He had said, Destroy this temple, and in three days I shall raise it up, speaking of the temple of His Body, which was now about to be thrown down.

THE BAPTISM OF JOHN, WHENCE WAS IT?

"And they come again to Jerusalem: and as He was walking in the temple, there come to Him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders; and they said unto Him, By what authority doest Thou these things? or who gave Thee this authority to do these things? And Jesus said unto them, I will ask of you one question, and answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or from men? answer Me. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven: He will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But should we say, From men—they feared the people: for all verily held John to be a prophet. And they answered Jesus and say, We know not. And Jesus saith unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."—MARK xi. 27–33 (R.V.).

THE question put to Jesus by the hierarchy of Jerusalem is recorded in all the synoptic Gospels. But in some respects the story is most pointed in the narrative of St. Mark. And it is natural that he, the historian especially of the energies of Christ, should lay stress upon a challenge addressed to Him, by reason of His masterful words and deeds. At the outset, he had recorded the astonishment of the people because Jesus taught with authority, because "Verily I say" replaced the childish and servile methods by which the scribe and the Pharisee sustained their most wilful innovations.

When first he relates a miracle, he tells how their wonder increased, because with authority Jesus commanded the unclean spirits and they obeyed, respecting

His self-reliant word "I command thee to come out," more than the most elaborate incantations and exorcisms. St. Mark's first record of collision with the priests was when Jesus carried His claim still farther, and said "The Son of man hath authority" (it is the same word) "on earth to forgive sins." Thus we find the Gospel quite conscious of what so forcibly strikes a careful modern reader, the assured and independent tone of Jesus; His bearing, so unlike that of a disciple or a commentator; His consciousness that the Scriptures themselves are they which testify of Him, and that only He can give the life which men think they possess in these. In the very teaching of lowliness Jesus exempts Himself, and forbids others to be Master and Lord, because these titles belong to Him.

Impressive as such claims appear when we awake to them, it is even more suggestive to reflect that we can easily read the Gospels and not be struck by them. We do not start when He bids all the weary to come to Him, and offers them rest, and yet declares Himself to be meek and lowly. He is meek and lowly while He makes such claims. His bearing is that of the highest rank, joined with the most perfect graciousness; His great claims never irritate us, because they are palpably His due, and we readily concede the astonishing elevation whence He so graciously bends down so low. And this is one evidence of the truth and power of the character which the Apostles drew.

How natural is this also, that immediately after Palm Sunday, when the people have hailed their Messiah, royal and a Saviour, and when He has accepted their homage, we find new indications of authority in His bearing and His actions. He promptly took them at their word. It was now that He wrought His only

miracle of judgment, and although it was but the withering of a tree (since He came not to destroy men's lives but to save them), yet was there a dread symbolical sentence involved upon all barren and unfruitful men and Churches. In the very act of triumphal entry, He solemnly pronounced judgment upon the guilty city which would not accept her King.

Arrived at the temple, He surveyed its abuses and defilements, and returned on the morrow (and so not spurred by sudden impulse, but of deliberate purpose), to drive out them that sold and bought. Two years ago He had needed to scourge the intruders forth, but now they are overawed by His majesty, and obey His word. Then, too, they were rebuked for making His Father's house a house of merchandise, but now it is His own—"My House," but degraded yet farther into a den of thieves.

But while traffic and pollution shrank away, misery and privation were attracted to Him; the blind and the lame came and were healed in the very temple; and the centre and rallying-place of the priests and scribes beheld His power to save. This drove them to extremities. He was carrying the war into the heart of their territories, establishing Himself in their stronghold, and making it very plain that since the people had hailed Him King, and He had responded to their acclaims, He would not shrink from whatever His view of that great office might involve.

While they watched, full of bitterness and envy, they were again impressed, as at the beginning, by the strange, autocratic, spontaneous manner in which He worked, making Himself the source of His blessings, as no prophet had ever done since Moses expiated so dearly the offence of saying, Must we fetch you water

out of the rock? Jesus acted after the fashion of Him Who openeth His hands and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. Why did He not give the glory to One above? Why did He not supplicate, nor invoke, but simply bestow? Where were the accustomed words of supplication, "Hear me, O Lord God, hear me," or, "Where is the Lord God of Israel?"

Here they discerned a flaw, a heresy; and they would force Him either to make a fatal claim, or else to moderate His pretensions at their bidding, which would promptly restore their lost influence and leadership.

Nor need we shrink from confessing that our Lord was justly open to such reproach, unless He was indeed Divine, unless He was deliberately preparing His followers for that astonishing revelation, soon to come, which threw the Church upon her knees in adoration of her God manifest in flesh. It is hard to understand how the Socinian can defend his Master against the charge of encroaching on the rights and honours of Deity, and (to borrow a phrase from a different connection) sitting down at the right hand of the Majesty of God, whereas every priest standeth ministering. If He were a creature, He culpably failed to tell us the conditions upon which He received a delegated authority, and the omission has made His Church ever since idolatrous. It is one great and remarkable lesson suggested by this verse: if Jesus were not Divine, what was He?

Thus it came to pass, in direct consequence upon the events which opened the great week of the triumph and the cross of Jesus, that the whole rank and authority of the temple system confronted Him with a stern question. They sat in Moses' seat. They were entitled to examine the pretensions of a new and

aspiring teacher. They had a perfect right to demand "Tell us by what authority thou doest these things." The works are not denied, but the source whence they flow is questioned.

After so many centuries, the question is fresh to-day. For still the spirit of Christ is working in His world, openly, palpably, spreading blessings far and wide. It is exalting multitudes of ignoble lives by hopes that are profound, far-reaching, and sublime. When savage realms are explored, it is Christ Who hastens thither with His gospel, before the trader in rum and gunpowder can exhibit the charms of a civilization without a creed. In the gloomiest haunts of disease and misery, madness, idiotcy, orphanage, and vice, there is Christ at work, the good Samaritan, pouring oil and wine into the gaping wounds of human nature, acting quite upon His own authority, careless who looks askance, not asking political economy whether genuine charity is pauperisation, nor questioning the doctrine of development, whether the progress of the race demands the pitiless rejection of the unfit, and selection only of the strongest specimens for survival. That iron creed may be natural; but if so, ours is supernatural, it is a law of spirit and life, setting us free from that base and selfish law of sin and death. The existence and energy of Christian forces in our modern world is indisputable: never was Jesus a more popular and formidable claimant of its crown; never did more Hosannas follow Him into the temple. But now as formerly His credentials are demanded: what is His authority and how has He come by it?

Now we say of modern as of ancient inquiries, that they are right; investigation is inevitable and a duty.

But see how Jesus dealt with those men of old.

Let us not misunderstand Him. He did not merely set one difficulty against another, as if we should start some scientific problem, and absolve ourselves from the duty of answering any inquiry until science had disposed of this. Doubtless it is logical enough to point out that all creeds, scientific and religious alike, have their unsolved problems. But the reply of Jesus was not a dexterous evasion, it went to the root of things, and, therefore, it stands good for time and for eternity. He refused to surrender the advantage of a witness to whom He was entitled: He demanded that all the facts and not some alone should be investigated. In truth their position bound His interrogators to examine His credentials; to do so was not only their privilege but their duty. But then they must begin at the beginning. Had they performed this duty for the Baptist? Who or what was that mysterious, lonely, stern preacher of righteousness who had stirred the national heart so profoundly, and whom all men still revered? They themselves had sent to question him, and his answer was notorious: he had said that he was sent before the Christ; he was only a voice, but a voice which demanded the preparation of a way before the Lord Himself, Who was approaching, and a highway for our God. What was the verdict of these investigators upon that great movement? What would they make of the decisive testimony of the Baptist?

As the perilous significance of this consummate rejoinder bursts on their crafty intelligence, as they recoil confounded from the exposure they have brought upon themselves, St. Mark tells how the question was pressed home, "Answer Me!" But they dared not call John an impostor, and yet to confess him was to authenticate the seal upon our Lord's credentials. And Jesus is

palpably within His rights in refusing to be questioned of such authorities as these. Yet immediately afterwards, with equal skill and boldness, He declared Himself, and yet defied their malice, in the story of the lord of a vineyard, who had vainly sent many servants to claim its fruit, and at the last sent his beloved son.

Now apply the same process to the modern opponents of the faith, and it will be found that multitudes of their assaults on Christianity imply the negation of what they will not and dare not deny. Some will not believe in miracles because the laws of nature work uniformly. But their uniformity is undisturbed by human operations; the will of man wields, without cancelling, these mighty forces which surround us. And why may not the will of God do the same, if there be a God? Ask them whether they deny His existence, and they will probably declare themselves Agnostics, which is exactly the ancient answer, "We cannot tell." Now as long as men avow their ignorance of the existence or non-existence of a Deity, they cannot assert the impossibility of miracles, for miracles are simply actions which reveal God, as men's actions reveal their presence.

Again, a demand is made for such evidence, to establish the faith, as cannot be had for any fact beyond the range of the exact sciences. We are asked, Why should we stake eternity upon anything short of demonstration? Yet it will be found that the objector is absolutely persuaded, and acts on his persuasion of many "truths which never can be proved"—of the fidelity of his wife and children, and above all, of the difference between right and wrong. That is a fundamental principle: deny it, and society becomes impossible. And yet sceptical theories are widely diffused

which really, though unconsciously, sap the very foundations of morality, or assert that it is not from heaven but of men, a mere expediency, a prudential arrangement of society.

Such arguments may well "fear the people," for the instincts of mankind know well that all such explanations of conscience do really explain it away.

And it is quite necessary in our days, when religion is impugned, to see whether the assumptions of its assailants would not compromise time as well as eternity, and to ask, What think ye of all those fundamental principles which sustain the family, society, and the state, while they bear testimony to the Church of Christ.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HUSBANDMEN.

"And He began to speak unto them in parables. A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a pit for the wine-press, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruits of the vineyard. And they took him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant: and him they wounded in the head, and handled shamefully. And he sent another; and him they killed: and many others; beating some, and killing some. He had yet one, a beloved son: he sent him last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard. What, therefore, will the Lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. Have ye not read even this Scripture:

> The stone which the builders rejected,
> The same was made the head of the corner:
> This was from the Lord,
> And it is marvellous in our eyes?

And they sought to lay hold on Him; and they feared the multitude; for they perceived that He spake the parable against them: and they left Him, and went away.—MARK xii. 1-12 (R.V.).

THE rulers of His people have failed to make Jesus responsible to their inquisition. He has exposed the hollowness of their claim to investigate His commission, and formally refused to tell them by what authority He did these things. But what He would not say for an unjust cross-examination, He proclaimed

to all docile hearts; and the skill which disarmed His enemies is not more wonderful than that which in their hearing answered their question, yet left them no room for accusation. This was achieved by speaking to them in parables. The indifferent might hear and not perceive: the keenness of malice would surely understand but could not easily impeach a simple story; but to His own followers it would be given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

His first words would be enough to arouse attention. The psalmist had told how God brought a vine out of Egypt, and cast out the heathen and planted it. Isaiah had carried the image farther, and sung of a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. The Well-beloved, Whose it was, cleared the ground for it, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower, and hewed out a wine-press, and looked that it should bring forth grapes, but it had brought forth wild grapes. Therefore He would lay it waste. This well-known and recognized type the Lord now adopted, but modified it to suit His purpose. As in a former parable the sower slept and rose, and left the earth to bring forth fruit of itself, so in this, the Lord of the vineyard let it out to husbandmen and went into a far country. This is our Lord's own explanation of that silent time in which no special interpositions asserted that God was nigh, no prophecies were heard, no miracles startled the careless. It was the time when grace already granted should have been peacefully ripening. Now we live in such a period. Unbelievers desire a sign. Impatient believers argue that if our Master is as near us as ever, the same portents must attest His presence; and, therefore, they recognise the gift of tongues in hysterical clamour, and stake the honour of religion upon faith-healing, and those various

obscure phenomena which the annals of every fanaticism can rival. But the sober Christian understands that, even as the Lord of the vineyard went into another country, so Christ His Son (Who in spiritual communion is ever with His people) in another sense has gone into a far country to receive a kingdom and to return. In the interval, marvels would be simply an anachronism. The best present evidence of the faith lies in the superior fruitfulness of the vineyard He has planted, in the steady advance to rich maturity of the vine He has imported from another clime.

At this point Jesus begins to add a new significance to the ancient metaphor. The husbandmen are mentioned. Men there were in the ancient Church, who were specially responsible for the culture of the vineyard. As He spoke, the symbol explained itself. The imposing array of chief priests and scribes and elders stood by, who had just claimed as their prerogative that He should make good His commission to their scrutiny; and none would be less likely to mistake His meaning than these self-conscious lovers of chief seats in the synagogues. The structure of the parable, therefore, admits their official rank, as frankly as when Jesus bade His disciples submit to their ordinances because they sit in Moses' seat. But He passes on, easily and as if unconsciously, to record that special messengers from heaven had, at times, interrupted the self-indulgent quietude of the husbandmen. Because the fruit of the vineyard had not been freely rendered, a bondservant was sent to demand it. The epithet implies that the messenger was lower in rank, although his direct mission gave him authority even over the keepers of the vineyard. It expresses exactly the position of the prophets, few of them of priestly rank, some of them very

humble in extraction, and very rustic in expression, but all sent in evil days to faithless husbandmen, to remind them that the vineyard was not their own, and to receive the fruits of righteousness. Again and again the demand is heard, for He sent "many others;" and always it is rejected with violence, which sometimes rises to murder. As they listened, they must have felt that all this was true, that while prophet after prophet had come to a violent end, not one had seen the official hierarchy making common cause with him. And they must also have felt how ruinous was this rejoinder to their own demand that the people should forsake a teacher when they rejected him. Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him? was their scornful question. But the answer was plain, As long as they built the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnished the tombs of the righteous, and said, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets, they confessed that men could not blindly follow a hierarchy merely as such, since they were not the official successors of the prophets but of those who slew them. The worst charge brought against them was only that they acted according to analogy, and filled up the deeds of their fathers. It had always been the same.

The last argument of Stephen, which filled his judges with madness, was but the echo of this great impeachment. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them which showed before of the coming of the Righteous One, of Whom ye have now become the betrayers and murderers.

That last defiance of heaven, which Stephen thus denounced, his Master distinctly foretold. And He

added the appalling circumstance, that however they might deceive themselves and sophisticate their conscience, they really knew Him Who He was. They felt, at the very least, that into His hands should pass all the authority and power they had so long monopolized: "This is the Heir; come let us kill Him and the inheritance shall be ours." If there were no more, the utterance of these words put forth an extraordinary claim.

All that should have been rendered up to heaven and was withheld, all that previous messengers had demanded on behalf of God without avail, all "the inheritance" which these wicked husbandmen were intercepting, all this Jesus announces to be His own, while reprehending the dishonesty of any other claim upon it. And as a matter of fact, if Jesus be not Divine, He has intercepted more of the worship due to the Eternal, has attracted to Himself more of the homage of the loftiest and profoundest minds, than any false teacher within the pale of monotheism has ever done. It is the bounden duty of all who revere Jesus even as a teacher, of all who have eyes to see that His coming was the greatest upward step in the progress of humanity, to consider well what was implied, when, in the act of blaming the usurpers of the heritage of God, Jesus declared that inheritance to be His own. But this is not all, though it is what He declares that the husbandmen were conscious of. The parable states, not only that He is heir, but heir by virtue of His special relationship to the Supreme. Others are bondservants or husbandmen, but He is the Son. He does not inherit as the worthiest and most obedient, but by right of birth; and His Father, in the act of sending Him, expects even these bloodstained outlaws to reverence His Son. In such a phrase, applied to such criminals, we are made to feel the lofty

rank alike of the Father and His Son, which ought to have overawed even them. And when we read that "He had yet one, a beloved Son," it seems as if the veil of eternity were uplifted, to reveal a secret and awful intimacy, of which, nevertheless, some glimmering consciousness should have controlled the most desperate heart.

But they only reckoned that if they killed the Heir, the inheritance would become their own. It seems the wildest madness, that men should know and feel Who He was, and yet expect to profit by desecrating His rights. And yet so it was from the beginning. If Herod were not fearful that the predicted King of the Jews was indeed born, the massacre of the Innocents was idle. If the rulers were not fearful that this counsel and work was of God, they would not, at Gamaliel's bidding, have refrained from the Apostles. And it comes still closer to the point to observe that, if they had attached no importance, even in their moment of triumph, to the prediction of His rising from the dead, they would not have required a guard, nor betrayed the secret recognition which Jesus here exposes. The same blind miscalculation is in every attempt to obtain profit or pleasure by means which are known to transgress the laws of the all-beholding Judge of all. It is committed every day, under the pressure of strong temptation, by men who know clearly that nothing but misery can result. So true is it that action is decided, not by a course of logic in the brain, but by the temperament and bias of our nature as a whole. We need not suppose that the rulers roundly spoke such words as these, even to themselves. The infamous motive lurked in ambush, too far in the back ground of the mind perhaps even for consciousness. But it was

there, and it affected their decision, as lurking passions and self-interests always will, as surely as iron deflects the compass. "They caught Him and killed Him," said the unfaltering lips of their victim. And He added a circumstance of pain which we often overlook, but to which the great minister of the circumcision was keenly sensitive, and often reverted, the giving Him up to the Gentiles, to a death accursed among the Jews; "they cast Him forth out of the vineyard."

All evil acts are based upon an overestimate of the tolerance of God. He had seemed to remain passive while messenger after messenger was beaten, stoned, or slain. But now that they had filled up the iniquity of their fathers, the Lord of the vineyard would come in person to destroy them, and give the vineyard to others. This last phrase is strangely at variance with the notion that the days of a commissioned ministry are over, as, on the other hand, the whole parable is at variance with the notion that a priesthood can be trusted to sit in exclusive judgment upon doctrine for the Church.

At this point St. Mark omits an incident so striking, although small, that its absence is significant. The by-standers said, "God forbid!" and when the horrified exclamation betrayed their consciousness of the position, Jesus was content, without a word, to mark their self-conviction by His searching gaze. "He looked upon them." The omission would be unaccountable if St. Mark were simply a powerful narrator of graphic incidents; but it is explained when we think that for him the manifestation of a mighty Personage was all in all, and the most characteristic and damaging admissions of the hierarchy were as nothing compared with a word of his Lord. Thereupon he goes straight

on to record that, besides refuting their claim by the history of the past, and asserting His own supremacy in a phrase at once guarded in form and decisive in import, Jesus also appealed to Scripture. It was written that by special and marvellous interposition of the Lord a stone which the recognized builders had rejected should crown the building. And the quotation was not only decisive as showing that their rejection could not close the controversy; it also compensated, with a promise of final victory, the ominous words in which their malice had seemed to do its worst. Jesus often predicted His death, but He never despaired of His kingdom.

No wonder that the rulers sought to arrest Him, and perceived that He penetrated and despised their schemes. And their next device is a natural outcome from the fact that they feared the people, but did not discontinue their intrigues; for this was a crafty and dangerous attempt to estrange from Him the admiring multitude.

THE TRIBUTE MONEY.

"And they send unto Him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, that they might catch Him in talk. And when they were come, they say unto Him, Master, we know that Thou art true, and carest not for any one: for Thou regardest not the person of men, but of a truth teachest the way of God: Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye Me? bring Me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto Him, Cæsar's. And Jesus said unto them, Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's. And they marvelled greatly at Him."—MARK xii. 13–17 (R.V.).

THE contrast is very striking between this incident and the last. Instead of a challenge, Jesus is respectfully

consulted; and instead of a formal concourse of the authorities of His religion, He is Himself the authority to Whom a few perplexed people profess to submit their difficulty. Nevertheless, it is a new and subtle effort of the enmity of His defeated foes. They have sent to Him certain Pharisees who will excite the popular indignation if He yields anything to the foreigner, and Herodians who will, if He refuses, bring upon Him the colder and deadlier vengeance of Rome. They flatter, in order to stimulate, that fearless utterance which must often have seemed to them so rash: "We know that Thou art true, and carest not for any one, for Thou regardest not the person of men, but of a truth teachest the way of God." And they appeal to a higher motive by representing the case to be one of practical and personal urgency. "Shall we give, or shall we not give?"

Never was it more necessary to join the wisdom of the serpent to the innocence of the dove, for it would seem that He must needs answer directly, and that no direct answer can fail to have the gravest consequences. But in their eagerness to secure this menacing position, they have left one weak point in the attack. They have made the question altogether a practical one. The abstract doctrine of the right to drive out a foreign power, of the limits of authority and freedom, they have not raised. It is simply a question of the hour, Shall we give or shall we not give?

And Jesus baffled them by treating it as such. There was no longer a national coinage, except only of the half shekel for the temple tax. When He asked them for a smaller coin, they produced a Roman penny stamped with the effigy of Cæsar. Thus they confessed the use of the Roman currency. Now since they

accepted the advantages of subjugation, they ought also to endure its burdens: since they traded as Roman subjects, they ought to pay the Roman tribute. Not He had preached submission, but they had avowed it; and any consequent unpopularity would fall not upon Him but them. They had answered their own question. And Jesus laid down the broad and simple rule, "Render (pay back) unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's. And they marvelled greatly at Him." No wonder they marvelled, for it would be hard to find in all the records of philosophy so ready and practical a device to baffle such cunning intriguers, such keenness in One Whose life was so far removed from the schools of worldly wisdom, joined with so firm a grasp on principle, in an utterance so brief, yet going down so far to the roots of action.

Now the words of Jesus are words for all time; even when He deals with a question of the hour, He treats it from the point of view of eternal fitness and duty; and this command to render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's has become the charter of the state against all usurpations of tyrannous ecclesiastics. A sphere is recognized in which obedience to the law is a duty to God. But it is absurd to pretend that Christ taught blind and servile obedience to all tyrants in all circumstances, for this would often make it impossible to obey the second injunction, and to render unto God the things which are God's,—a clause which asserts in turn the right of conscience and the Church against all secular encroachments. The point to observe is, that the decision of Jesus is simply an inference, a deduction. St. Matthew has inserted the word "therefore," and it is certainly

implied: render unto Cæsar the things which you confess to be his own, which bear his image upon their face.

Can we suppose that no such inference gives point to the second clause? It would then become, like too many of our pious sayings, a mere supplement, inappropriate, however excellent, a make weight, and a platitude. No example of such irrelevance can be found in the story of our Lord. When, finding the likeness of Cæsar on the coin, He said, Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's, He at least suggested that the reason for both precepts ran parallel, and the image of the higher and heavenlier Monarch could be found on what He claims of us. And it is so. He claims all we have and all we are. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:" and "I have made thee, thou art Mine." And for us and ours alike the argument holds good. All the visible universe bears deeply stamped into its substance His image and superscription. The grandeur of mountains and stars, the fairness of violet and harebell, are alike revelations of the Creator. The heavens declare His glory: the firmament showeth His handiwork: the earth is full of His riches: all the discoveries which expand our mastery over nature and disease, over time and space, are proofs of His wisdom and goodness, Who laid the amazing plan which we grow wise by tracing out. Find a corner on which contrivance and benevolence have not stamped the royal image, and we may doubt whether that bleak spot owes Him tribute. But no desert is so blighted, no solitude so forlorn.

And we should render unto God the things which are God's, seeing His likeness in His world. "For the

invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things which are made, even His everlasting power and divinity."

And if most of all He demands the love, the heart of man, here also He can ask, "Whose image and superscription is this?" For in the image of God made He man. It is sometimes urged that this image was quite effaced when Adam fell. But it was not to protect the unfallen that the edict was spoken "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made He man." He was not an unfallen man of whom St. Paul said that he "ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God;" neither were they unfallen, of whom St. James said, "We curse men which are made after the likeness of God" (Gen. ix. 6; 1 Cor. xi. 7; James iii. 9). Common men, for whom the assassin lurks, who need instruction how to behave in church, and whom others scorn and curse, these bear upon them an awful likeness; and even when they refuse tribute to their king, He can ask them, Whose is this image?

We see it in the intellect, ever demanding new worlds to conquer, overwhelming us with its victories over time and space. "In apprehension how like a God." Alas for us! if we forget that the Spirit of knowledge and wisdom is no other than the Spirit of the Lord God.

We see this likeness far more in our moral nature. It is true that sin has spoiled and wasted this, yet there survives in man's heart, as nowhere else in our world, a strange sympathy with the holiness and love of God. No other of His attributes has the same power to thrill

us. Tell me that He lit the stars and can quench them with a word, and I reverence, perhaps I fear Him; yet such power is outside and beyond my sphere; it fails to touch me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Even the rarer human gifts, the power of a Czar, the wisdom of Bacon, are thus beyond me, I am unkindled, they do not find me out. But speak of holiness, even the stainless holiness of God, undefiled through all eternity, and you shake the foundations of my being. And why does the reflection that God is pure humble me more than the knowledge that God is omnipotent? Because it is my spiritual nature which is most conscious of the Divine image, blurred and defaced indeed, but not obliterated yet. Because while I listen I am dimly conscious of my birthright, my destiny, that I was born to resemble this, and all is lost if I come short of it. Because every child and every sinner feels that it is more possible for him to be like his God than like Newton, or Shakespere, or Napoleon. Because the work of grace is to call in the worn and degraded coinage of humanity, and, as the mint restamps and reissues the pieces which have grown thin and worn, so to renew us after the image of Him that created us.

CHRIST AND THE SADDUCEES.

"And there come unto Him Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection: and they asked Him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave a wife behind him, and leave no child, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed; and the second took her, and died, leaving no seed behind him; and the third likewise: and the seven left no seed. Last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. Jesus said unto them, Is it

not for this cause that ye err, that ye know not the Scriptures, nor the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as angels in heaven. But as touching the dead, that they are raised; have ye not read in the book of Moses, in *the place concerning* the Bush, how God spake unto him, saying, I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: ye do greatly err."—MARK xii. 18–27 (R.V.).

CHRIST came that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed. And so it was, that when He had silenced the examination of the hierarchy, and baffled their craft, the Sadducees were tempted to assail Him. Like the rationalists of every age, they stood coldly aloof from popular movements, and we seldom find them interfering with Christ or His followers, until their energies were roused by the preaching of His Resurrection, so directly opposed to their fundamental doctrines.

Their appearance now is extremely natural. The repulse of every other party left them the only champions of orthodoxy against the new movement, with everything to win by success, and little to lose by failure. There is a tone of quiet and confident irony in their interrogation, well befitting an upper-class group, a secluded party of refined critics, rather than practical teachers with a mission to their fellow-men. They break utterly new ground by raising an abstract and subtle question, a purely intellectual problem, but one which reduced the doctrine of a resurrection to an absurdity, if only their premises can be made good. And this peculiarity is often overlooked in criticism upon our Lord's answer. Its intellectual subtlety was only the adoption by Christ of the weapons of his adversaries. But at the same time, He lays great and special stress upon the authority of Scripture, in this encounter with the party which least acknowledged it.

Their objection, stated in its simplest form, is the complication which would result if the successive ties for which death makes room must all revive together when death is abolished. If a woman has married a second time, whose wife shall she be? But their statement of the case is ingenious, not only because they push the difficulty to an absurd and ludicrous extent, but much more so because they base it upon a Divine ordinance. If there be a Resurrection, Moses must answer for all the confusion that will ensue, for Moses gave the commandment, by virtue of which a woman married seven times. No offspring of any union gave it a special claim upon her future life. "In the Resurrection, whose wife shall she be of them?" they ask, conceding with a quiet sarcasm that this absurd event must needs occur.

For these controversialists the question was solely of the physical tie, which had made of twain one flesh. They had no conception that the body can be raised otherwise than as it perished, and they rightly enough felt certain that on such a resurrection woeful complications must ensue.

Now Jesus does not rebuke their question with such stern words as He had just employed to others, "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" They were doubtless sincere in their conviction, and at least they had not come in the disguise of perplexed inquirers and almost disciples. He blames them, but more gently: "Is it not for this cause that ye err, because ye know not the Scriptures, nor the power of God?" They could not know one and not the other, but the boastful wisdom of this world, so ready to point a jibe by quoting Moses, had never truly grasped the meaning of the writer it appealed to.

Jesus, it is plain, does not quote Scripture only as having authority with His opponents: He accepts it heartily: He declares that human error is due to ignorance of its depth and range of teaching; and He recognizes the full roll of the sacred books "the Scriptures."

It has rightly been said, that none of the explicit statements, commonly relied upon, do more to vindicate for Holy Writ the authority of our Lord, than this simple incidental question.

Jesus proceeded to restate the doctrine of the Resurrection and then to prove it; and the more His brief words are pondered, the more they will expand and deepen.

St. Paul has taught us that the dead in Christ shall rise first (1 Thess. iv. 16). Of such attainment it is written, Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first Resurrection (Rev. xx. 6).

Now since among the lost there could be no question of family ties, and consequent embarrassments, Jesus confines His statement to these happy ones, of whom the Sadducee could think no better than that their new life should be a reproduction of their existence here,—a theory which they did wisely in rejecting. He uses the very language taken up afterwards by His apostle, and says, "When they shall rise from the dead." And He asserts that marriage is at an end, and they are as the angels in heaven. Here is no question of the duration of pure and tender human affection, nor do these words compromise in any degree the hopes of faithful hearts, which cling to one another. Surely we may believe that in a life which is the outcome and resultant of this life, as truly as the grain is of the seed, in a life also where nothing shall be forgotten, but on the contrary we shall know what we know not now,

there, tracing back the flood of their immortal energies to obscure fountains upon earth, and seeing all that each has owed half unconsciously to the fidelity and wisdom of the other, the true partners and genuine helpmeets of this world shall for ever drink some peculiar gladness, each from the other's joy. There is no reason why the close of formal unions which include the highest and most perfect friendships, should forbid such friendships to survive and flourish in the more kindly atmosphere of heaven.

What Christ asserts is simply the dissolution of the tie, as an inevitable consequence of such a change in the very nature of the blessed ones as makes the tie incongruous and impossible. In point of fact, marriage as the Sadducee thought of it, is but the counterpoise of death, renewing the face which otherwise would disappear, and when death is swallowed up, it vanishes as an anachronism. In heaven "they are as the angels," the body itself being made "a spiritual body," set free from the appetites of the flesh, and in harmony with the glowing aspirations of the Spirit, which now it weighs upon and retards. If any would object that to be as the angels is to be without a body, rather than to possess a spiritual body, it is answer enough that the context implies the existence of a body, since no person ever spoke of a resurrection of the soul. Moreover it is an utterly unwarrantable assumption that angels are wholly without substance. Many verses appear to imply the opposite, and the cubits of measurement of the New Jerusalem were "according to the measure of a man, that is of an angel" (Rev. xxi. 17), which seems to assert a very curious similarity indeed.

The objection of the Sadducees was entirely obviated, therefore by the broader, bolder, and more spiritual

view of a resurrection which Jesus taught. And by far the greater part of the cavils against this same doctrine which delight the infidel lecturer and popular essayist of to-day would also die a natural death, if the free and spiritual teaching of Jesus, and its expansion by St. Paul, were understood. But we breathe a wholly different air when we read the speculations even of so great a thinker as St. Augustine, who supposed that we should rise with bodies somewhat greater than our present ones, because all the hair and nails we ever trimmed away must be diffused throughout the mass, lest they should produce deformity by their excessive proportions (*De Civitate Dei*, xxii. 19). To all such speculation, he who said, To every seed his own body, says, Thou fool, thou sowest not that body that shall be. But though Jesus had met these questions, it did not follow that His doctrine was true, merely because a certain difficulty did not apply. And, therefore, He proceeded to prove it by the same Moses to whom they had appealed, and whom Jesus distinctly asserts to be the author of the book of Exodus. God said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: ye do greatly err."

The argument is not based upon the present tense of the verb *to be* in this assertion, for in the Greek the verb is not expressed. In fact the argument is not a verbal one at all; or else it would be satisfied by the doctrine of the immortality of the spirit, and would not establish any resurrection of the body. It is based upon the immutability of God, and, therefore, the imperishability of all that ever entered into vital and real relationship with Him. To cancel such a relationship would introduce a change into the Eternal. And Moses,

to whom they appealed, had heard God expressly proclaim Himself the God of those who had long since passed out of time. It was, therefore, clear that His relationship with them lived on, and this guaranteed that no portion, even the humblest, of their true personality should perish. Now the body is as real a part of humanity, as the soul and spirit are, although a much lowlier part. And, therefore, it must not really die.

It is solemn to observe how Jesus, in this second part of His argument, passes from the consideration of the future of the blessed to that of all mankind; "as touching the dead that they are raised." With others than the blessed, therefore, God has a real though a dread relationship. And it will prove hard to reconcile this argument of Christ with the existence of any time when any soul shall be extinguished.

"The body is for the Lord," said St. Paul, arguing against the vices of the flesh, "and the Lord for the body." From these words of Christ he may well have learned that profound and far-reaching doctrine, which will never have done its work in the Church and in the world, until whatever defiles, degrades, or weakens that which the Lord has consecrated is felt to blaspheme by implication the God of our manhood, unto Whom all our life ought to be lived; until men are no longer dwarfed in mines, nor poisoned in foul air, nor massacred in battle, men whose intimate relationship with God the Eternal is of such a kind as to guarantee the resurrection of the poor frames which we destroy.

How much more does this great proclamation frown upon the sins by which men dishonour their own flesh. "Know ye not," asked the apostle, carrying the same doctrine to its utmost limit, "that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" So truly is God our God

THE DISCERNING SCRIBE.

"And one of the scribes came, and heard them questioning together, and knowing that He had answered them well, asked Him, What commandment is the first of all? Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto Him, Of a truth, Master, Thou hast well said that He is one; and there is none other but He: and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask Him any question."—MARK xii. 28–34 (R.V.).

THE praise which Jesus bestowed upon this lawyer is best understood when we take into account the circumstances, the pressure of assailants with ensnaring questions, the sullen disappointment or palpable exasperation of the party to which the scribe belonged. He had probably sympathized in their hostility; and had come expecting and desiring the discomfiture of Jesus. But if so, he was a candid enemy; and as each new attempt revealed more clearly the spiritual insight, the self-possession and balanced wisdom of Him Who had been represented as a dangerous fanatic, his unfriendly opinion began to waver. For he too was at issue with popular views: he had learned in the Scriptures that God desireth not sacrifice, that incense might be an abomination to Him, and new moons and sabbaths things to do away with. And so, perceiving that He had answered them well, the scribe asked, upon his own account, a very different question, not rarely debated in their schools, and often

answered with grotesque frivolity, but which he felt to go down to the very root of things. Instead of challenging Christ's authority, he tries His wisdom. Instead of striving to entangle Him in dangerous politics, or to assail with shallow ridicule the problems of the life to come, he asks, What commandment is the first of all? And if we may accept as complete this abrupt statement of his interrogation, it would seem to have been drawn from him by a sudden impulse, or wrenched by an over-mastering desire, despite of reluctance and false shame.

The Lord answered him with great solemnity and emphasis. He might have quoted the commandment only. But He at once supported the precept itself and also His own view of its importance by including the majestic prologue, "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is one; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

The unity of God, what a massive and reassuring thought! Amid the debasements of idolatry, with its deification of every impulse and every force, amid the distractions of chance and change, seemingly so capricious and even discordant, amid the complexities of the universe and its phenomena, there is wonderful strength and wisdom in the reflection that God is one. All changes obey His hand which holds the rein; by Him the worlds were made. The exiled patriarch was overwhelmed by the majesty of the revelation that his fathers' God was God in Bethel even as in Beer-sheba: it charmed away the bitter sense of isolation, it unsealed in him the fountains of worship and trust, and sent him forward with a new hope of protection and prosperity. The unity of God, really apprehended, is

a basis for the human will to repose upon, and to become self-consistent and at peace. It was the parent of the fruitful doctrine of the unity of nature which underlies all the scientific victories of the modern world. In religion, St. Paul felt that it implies the equal treatment of all the human race, when he asked, "Is He the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yea, of Gentiles also, if so be that God is one" (Rom iii. 29 R.V.). To be one, he seems to say, implies being universal also. And if it thus excludes the reprobation of races, it disproves equally that of individual souls, and all thought of such unequal and partial treatment as should inspire one with hope of indulgence in guilt, or with fear that his way is hid from the Lord.

But if this be true, if there be one fountain of all life and loveliness and joy, of all human tenderness and all moral glory, how are we bound to love Him. Every other affection should only deepen our adoring loyalty to Him Who gives it. No cold or formal service can meet His claim, Who gives us the power to serve. No, we must love Him. And as all our nature comes from Him, so must all be consecrated: that love must embrace all the affections of "heart and soul" panting after Him, as the hart after the waterbrooks; and all the deep and steady convictions of the "mind," musing on the work of His hand, able to give a reason for its faith; and all the practical homage of the "strength," living and dying to the Lord. How easy, then, would be the fulfilment of His commandments in detail, and how surely it would follow. All the precepts of the first table are clearly implied in this.

In such another commandment were summed up also the precepts which concerned our neighbour

When we love him as ourselves (neither exaggerating his claims beyond our own, nor allowing our own to trample upon his), then we shall work no ill to our neighbour, and so love shall fulfil the law. There is none other commandment greater than these.

The questioner saw all the nobility of this reply; and the disdain, the anger, and perhaps the persecution of his associates could not prevent him from an admiring and reverent repetition of the Saviour's words, and an avowal that all the ceremonial observances of Judaism were as nothing compared with this.

While he was thus judging, he was being judged. As he knew that Jesus had answered well, so Jesus saw that he answered discreetly; and in view of his unprejudiced judgment, his spiritual insight, and his frank approval of One Who was then despised and rejected, He said, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. But he was not yet within it, and no man knows his fate.

Sad yet instructive it is to think that he may have won the approval of Christ, and heard His words, so full of discernment and of desire for his adherence, and yet never crossed the invisible and mysterious boundary which he then approached so nearly. But we also may know, and admire, and confess the greatness and goodness of Jesus, without forsaking all to follow Him.

His enemies had been defeated and put to shame, their murderous hate had been denounced, and the nets of their cunning had been rent like cobwebs; they had seen the heart of one of their own order kindled into open admiration, and they henceforth renounced as hopeless the attempt to conquer Jesus in debate. No man after that durst ask Him any questions.

He will now carry the war into their own country. It will be for them to answer Jesus.

DAVID'S LORD.

"And Jesus answered and said, as He taught in the temple, How say the scribes that the Christ is the Son of David? David himself said in the Holy Spirit,—

> The Lord said unto my Lord,
> Sit Thou on my right hand,
> Till I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet.

David himself calleth Him Lord; and whence is He His son? And the common people heard Him gladly. And in His teaching He said, Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and *to have* salutations in the marketplaces, and chief seats in the synagogues, and chief places at feasts: they which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; these shall receive greater condemnation. MARK xii. 35–40 (R.V.).

JESUS, having silenced in turn His official interrogators and the Sadducees, and won the heart of His honest questioner, proceeded to submit a searching problem to His assailants. Whose son was the Messiah? And when they gave Him an obvious and shallow answer, He covered them with confusion publicly. The event is full of that dramatic interest which St. Mark is so well able to discern and reproduce. How is it then that he passes over all this aspect of it, leaves us ignorant of the defeat and even of the presence of the scribes, and free to suppose that Jesus stated the whole problem in one long question, possibly without an opponent at hand to feel its force?

This is a remarkable proof that his concern was not really for the pictorial element in the story, but for the manifestation of the power of his Master, the "authority" which resounds through his opening chapters, the royalty which he exhibits at the close. To him the vital point is that Jesus, upon openly claiming to be the Christ, and repelling the vehement attacks which were

made upon Him as such, proceeded to unfold the astonishing greatness which this implied; and that after asserting the unity of God and His claim upon all hearts, He demonstrated that the Christ was sharer of His throne.

The Christ, they said, was the Son of David, and this was not false: Jesus had wrought many miracles for suppliants who addressed Him by that title. But was it all the truth? How then did David call Him Lord? A greater than David might spring from among his descendants, and hold rule by an original and not merely an ancestral claim: He might not reign as a son of David. Yet this would not explain the fact that David, who died ages before His coming, was inspired to call Him *My* Lord. Still less would it satisfy the assertion that God had bidden Him sit beside Him on His throne. For the scribes there was a serious warning in the promise that His enemies should be made His footstool, and for all the people a startling revelation in the words which follow, and which the Epistle to the Hebrews has unfolded, making this Son of David a priest for ever, after another order than that of Aaron.

No wonder that the multitude heard with gladness teaching at once so original, so profound, and so clearly justified by Scripture.

But it must be observed how remarkably this question of Jesus follows up His conversation with the scribe. Then He had based the supreme duty of love to God upon the supreme doctrine of the Divine Unity. He now proceeds to show that the throne of Deity is not a lonely throne, and to demand, Whose Son is He Who shares it, and Whom David in Spirit accosts by the same title as his God?

St. Mark is now content to give the merest indication of the final denunciation with which the Lord turned His back upon the scribes of Jerusalem, as He previously broke with those of Galilee. But it is enough to show how utterly beyond compromise was the rupture. The people were to beware of them: their selfish objects were betrayed in their very dress, and their desire for respectful salutations and seats of honour. Their prayers were a pretence, and they devoured widows' houses, acquiring under the cloke of religion what should have maintained the friendless. But their affected piety would only bring upon them a darker doom.

It is a tremendous impeachment. None is entitled to speak as Jesus did, who is unable to read hearts as He did. And yet we may learn from it that mere softness is not the meekness He demands, and that, when sinister motives are beyond doubt, the spirit of Jesus is the spirit of burning.

There is an indulgence for the wrongdoer which is mere feebleness and half compliance, and which shares in the guilt of Eli. And there is a dreadful anger which sins not, the wrath of the Lamb.

THE WIDOW'S MITE.

"And He sat down over against the treasury, and beheld how the multitude cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And He called unto Him His disciples, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, This poor widow cast in more than all they which are casting into the treasury; for they all did cast in of their superfluity; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living."—MARK xii. 41-44 (R.V.).

WITH words of stern denunciation Jesus for ever left the temple. Yet He lingered, as if reluctant, in the

outer court; and while the storm of His wrath was still resounding in all hearts, observed and pointed out an action of the lowliest beauty, a modest flower o. Hebrew piety in the vast desert of formality. It was not too modest, however, to catch, even in that agitating hour, the eye of Jesus; and while the scribes were devouring widows' houses, a poor widow could still, with two mites which make a farthing, win honourable mention from the Son of God. Thus He ever observes realities among pretences, the pure flame of love amid the sour smoke which wreathes around it. What He saw was the last pittance, cast to a service which in reality was no longer God's, yet given with a noble earnestness, a sacrifice pure from the heart.

1. His praise suggests to us the unknown observation, the unsuspected influences which surround us. She little guessed herself to be the one figure, amid a glittering group and where many were rich, who really interested the all-seeing Eye. She went away again, quite unconscious that the Lord had converted her two mites into a perennial wealth of contentment for lowly hearts, and instruction for the Church, quite ignorant that she was approved of Messiah, and that her little gift was the greatest event of all her story. So are we watched and judged in our least conscious and our most secluded hours.

2. We learn St. Paul's lesson, that, "if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according as a man hath, and not according as he hath not."

In war, in commerce, in the senate, how often does an accident at the outset blight a career for ever. One is taken in the net of circumstances, and his clipped wings can never soar again. But there is no such disabling accident in religion. God seeth the heart.

The world was redeemed by the blighted and thwarted career of One Who would fain have gathered His own city under His wing, but was refused and frustrated. And whether we cast in much, or only possess two mites, an offering for the rich to mock, He marks, understands, and estimates aright.

And while the world only sees the quantity, He weighs the motive of our actions. This is the true reason why we can judge nothing before the time, why the great benefactor is not really pointed out by the splendid benefaction, and why many that are last shall yet be first, and the first last.

3. The poor widow gave not a greater proportion of her goods, she gave all; and it has been often remarked that she had still, in her poverty, the opportunity of keeping back one half. But her heart went with her two mites. And, therefore, she was blessed. We may picture her return to her sordid drudgery, unaware of the meaning of the new light and peace which followed her, and why her heart sang for joy. We may think of the Spirit of Christ which was in her, leading her afterwards into the Church of Christ, an obscure and perhaps illiterate convert, undistinguished by any special gift, and only loved as the first Christians all loved each other. And we may think of her now, where the secrets of all hearts are made known, followed by myriads of the obscure and undistinguished whom her story has sustained and cheered, and by some who knew her upon earth, and were astonished to learn that this was she. Then let us ask ourselves, Is there any such secret of unobtrusive lowly service, born of love, which the future will associate with me?

M. McCASH

CHAPTER XIII.

THINGS PERISHING AND THINGS STABLE.

"And as He went forth out of the temple, one of His disciples saith unto Him, Master, behold, what manner of stones and what manner of buildings! And Jesus said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left here one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down. And as He sat on the Mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished? And Jesus began to say unto them, Take heed that no man lead you astray. Many shall come in My name, saying, I am *He;* and shall lead many astray. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be not troubled: *these things* must needs come to pass: but the end is not yet."—MARK xiii. 1–7 (R.V.).

NOTHING is more impressive than to stand before one of the great buildings of the world, and mark how the toil of man has rivalled the stability of nature, and his thought its grandeur. It stands up like a crag, and the wind whistles through its pinnacles as in a grove, and the rooks float and soar about its towers as they do among the granite peaks. Face to face with one of these mighty structures, man feels his own pettiness, shivering in the wind, or seeking a shadow from the sun, and thinking how even this breeze may blight or this heat fever him, and how at the longest he shall have crumbled into dust for ages, and his name, and possibly his race, have perished, while this

same pile shall stretch the same long shadow across the plain.

No wonder that the great masters of nations have all delighted in building, for thus they saw their power, and the immortality for which they hoped, made solid, embodied and substantial, and it almost seemed as if they had blended their memory with the enduring fabric of the world.

Such a building, solid, and vast, and splendid, white with marble, and blazing with gold, was the temple which Jesus now forsook. A little afterwards, we read that its Roman conqueror, whose race were the great builders of the world, in spite of the rules of war, and the certainty that the Jews would never remain quietly in subjection while it stood, "was reluctant to burn down so vast a work as this, since this would be a mischief to the Romans themselves, as it would be an ornament to their government while it lasted."

No wonder, then, that one of the disciples, who had seen Jesus weep for its approaching ruin, and who now followed His steps as He left it desolate, lingered, and spoke as if in longing and appeal, "Master, see what manner of stones, and what manner of buildings."

But to the eyes of Jesus all was evanescent as a bubble, doomed and about to perish: "Seest thou these great buildings, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down."

The words were appropriate to His solemn mood, for He had just denounced its guilt and flung its splendour from Him, calling it no longer "My house," nor "My Father's house," but saying, "Your house is left unto you desolate." Little could all the solid strength of the very foundations of the world itself avail against the thunderbolt of God. Moreover, it

was a time when He felt most keenly the consecration, the approaching surrender of His own life. In such an hour no splendours distract the penetrating vision; all the world is brief and frail and hollow to the man who has consciously given himself to God. It was the fitting moment at which to utter such a prophecy.

But, as He sat on the opposite slope, and gazed back upon the towers that were to fall, His three favoured disciples and Andrew came to ask Him privately when should these things be, and what would be the sign of their approach.

It is the common assertion of all unbelievers that the prophecy which followed has been composed since what passes for its fulfilment. When Jesus was murdered, and a terrible fate befel the guilty city, what more natural than to connect the two events? And how easily would a legend spring up that the sufferer foretold the penalty? But there is an obvious and complete reply. The prediction is too mysterious, its outlines are too obscure; and the ruin of Jerusalem is too inexplicably complicated with the final visitation of the whole earth, to be the issue of any vindictive imagination working with the history in view.

We are sometimes tempted to complain of this obscurity. But in truth it is wholesome and designed. We need not ask whether the original discourse was thus ambiguous, or they are right who suppose that a veil has since been drawn between us and a portion of the answer given by Jesus to His disciples. We know as much as it is meant that we should know. And this at least is plain, that any process of conscious or unconscious invention, working backwards after Jerusalem fell, would have given us far more explicit predictions than we possess. And, moreover, that

what we lose in gratification of our curiosity, we gain in personal warning to walk warily and vigilantly.

Jesus did not answer the question, When shall these things be? But He declared, to men who wondered at the overthrow of their splendid temple, that all earthly splendours must perish. And He revealed to them where true permanence may be discovered. These are two of the central thoughts of the discourse, and they are worthy of much more attention from its students than they commonly receive, being overlooked in the universal eagerness "to know the times and the seasons." They come to the surface in the distinct words, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

Now, if we are to think of this great prophecy as a lurid reflection thrown back by later superstition on the storm-clouds of the nation's fall, how shall we account for its solemn and pensive mood, utterly free from vindictiveness, entirely suited to Jesus as we think of Him, when leaving for ever the dishonoured shrine, and moving forward, as His meditations would surely do, beyond the occasion which evoked them? Not such is the manner of resentful controversialists, eagerly tracing imaginary judgments. They are narrow, and sharp, and sour.

1. The fall of Jerusalem blended itself, in the thought of Jesus, with the catastrophe which awaits all that appears to be great and stable. Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, so that, although armies set their bodies in the gap for these, and heroes shed their blood like water, yet they are divided among themselves and cannot stand. This prediction, we must remember, was made when the iron yoke of Rome imposed quiet upon as much of the world as a Galilean

was likely to take into account, and, therefore, was by no means so easy as it may now appear to us.

Nature itself should be convulsed. Earthquakes should rend the earth, blight and famine should disturb the regular course of seed-time and harvest. And these perturbations should be the working out of a stern law, and the sure token of sorer woes to come, the beginning of pangs which should usher in another dispensation, the birth-agony of a new time. A little later, and the sun should be darkened, and the moon should withdraw her light, and the stars should "be falling" from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens should be darkened. Lastly, the course of history should close, and the affairs of earth should come to an end, when the elect should be gathered together to the glorified Son of Man.

2. It was in sight of the ruin of all these things that He dared to add, My word shall not pass away.

Heresy should assail it, for many should come in the name of Christ, saying, I am He, and should lead many astray. Fierce persecutions should try His followers, and they should be led to judgment and delivered up. The worse afflictions of the heart would wring them, for brother should deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children should rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. But all should be too little to quench the immortality bestowed upon His elect. In their sore need, the Holy Ghost should speak in them: when they were caused to be put to death, he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

Now these words were treasured up as the utterances of One Who had just foretold His own approaching murder, and Who died accordingly amid circumstances

full of horror and shame. Yet His followers rejoiced to think that when the sun grew dark, and the stars were falling, He should be seen in the clouds coming with great glory.

It is the reversal of human judgment: the announcement that all is stable which appears unsubstantial, and all which appears solid is about to melt like snow.

And yet the world itself has since grown old enough to know that convictions are stronger than empires, and truths than armed hosts. And this is the King of Truth. He was born and came into the world to bear witness to the truth, and every one that is of the truth heareth His voice. He is the Truth become vital, the Word which was with God in the beginning.

THE IMPENDING JUDGMENT.

"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there shall be earthquakes in divers places; there shall be famines: these things are the beginning of travail. But take ye heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in synagogues shall ye be beaten; and before governors and kings shall ye stand for My sake, for a testimony unto them. And the gospel must first be preached unto all the nations. And when they lead you *to judgment*, and deliver you up, be not anxious beforehand what ye shall speak: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. And brother shall deliver up brother to death, and the father his child; and children shall rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake; but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. But when ye see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not (let him that readeth understand), then let them that are in Judæa flee unto the mountains: and let him that is on the housetop not go down, nor enter in, to take anything out of his house: and let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloke."—MARK xiii. 8-16 (R.V.).

WHEN we perceive that one central thought in our Lord's discourse about the last things is the contrast

between material things which are fleeting, and spiritual realities which abide, a question naturally arises, which ought not to be overlooked. Was the prediction itself anything more than a result of profound spiritual insight? Are we certain that prophecy in general was more than keenness of vision? There are flourishing empires now which perhaps a keen politician, and certainly a firm believer in retributive justice governing the world, must consider to be doomed. And one who felt the transitory nature of earthly resources might expect a time when the docks of London will resemble the lagoons of Venice, and the State which now predominates in Europe shall become partaker of the decrepitude Spain. But no such presage is a prophecy in the Christian sense. Even when suggested by religion, it does not claim any greater certainty than that of sagacious inference.

The general question is best met by pointing to such specific and detailed prophecies, especially concerning the Messiah, as the twenty-second Psalm, the fifty-third of Isaiah, and the ninth of Daniel.

But the prediction of the fall of Jerusalem, while we have seen that it has none of the minuteness and sharpness of an after-thought, is also too definite for a presentiment. The abomination which defiled the Holy Place, and yet left one last brief opportunity for hasty flight, the persecutions by which that catastrophe would be heralded, and the precipitating of the crisis for the elect's sake, were details not to be conjectured. So was the coming of the great retribution, the beginning of His kingdom within that generation, a limit which was foretold at least twice besides (Mark ix. 1 and xiv. 62), with which the "henceforth" in Matthew xxvi. 64 must be compared. And so was another circumstance

which is not enough considered: the fact that between the fall of Jerusalem and the Second Coming, however long or short the interval, no second event of a similar character, so universal in its effect upon Christianity, so epoch-making, should intervene. The coming of the Son of man should be "in those days after that tribulation."

The intervening centuries lay out like a plain country between two mountain tops, and did not break the vista, as the eye passed from the judgment of the ancient Church, straight on to the judgment of the world. Shall we say then that Jesus foretold that His coming would follow speedily? and that He erred? Men have been very willing to bring this charge, even in the face of His explicit assertions. "After a long time the Lord of that servant cometh. . . While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept. . . . If that wicked servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming."

It is true that these expressions are not found in St. Mark. But instead of them stands a sentence so startling, so unique, that it has caused to ill-instructed orthodoxy great searchings of heart. At least, however, the flippant pretence that Jesus fixed an early date for His return, ought to be silenced when we read, "Of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father."

These words are not more surprising than that He increased in wisdom; and marvelled at the faith of some, and the unbelief of others (Luke ii. 52; Matt. viii. 10; Mark vi. 6). They are involved in the great assertion, that He not only took the form of a servant, but emptied Himself (Phil. ii. 7). But they decide the question of the genuineness of the discourse; for when could

they have been invented? And they are to be taken in connection with others, which speak of Him not in His low estate, but as by nature and inherently, the Word and the Wisdom of God; aware of all that the Father doeth; and Him in Whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (John i. 1; Luke xi. 49; John v. 20; Col. ii. 9).

But these were "the days of His flesh;" and that expression is not meant to convey that He has since laid aside His body, for He says, "A spirit hath not flesh . . . as ye see Me have" (Heb. v. 7; Luke xxiv. 39). It must therefore express the limitations, now removed, by which He once condescended to be trammelled. What forbids us, then, to believe that His knowledge, like His power, was limited by a lowliness not enforced, but for our sakes chosen; and that as He could have asked for twelve legions of angels, yet chose to be bound and buffeted, so He could have known that day and hour, yet submitted to ignorance, that He might be made like in all points to His brethren? Souls there are for whom this wonderful saying, "the Son knoweth not," is even more affecting than the words, "The Son of man hath not where to lay His head."

But now the climax must be observed which made His ignorance more astonishing than that of the angels in heaven. The recent discourse must be remembered, which had asked His enemies to explain the fact that David called Him Lord, and spoke of God as occupying no lonely throne. And we must observe His emphatic expression, that His return shall be that of the Lord of the House (ver. 35), so unlike the temper which He impressed on every servant, and clearly teaching the Epistle to the Hebrews to speak of His fidelity as

that of a Son over His house, and to contrast it sharply with that of the most honourable servant (iii. 6).

It is plain, however, that Jesus did not fix, and renounced the power to fix, a speedy date for His second coming. He checked the impatience of the early Church by insisting that none knew the time.

But He drew the closest analogy between that event and the destruction of Jerusalem, and required a like spirit in those who looked for each.

Persecution should go before them. Signs would indicate their approach as surely as the budding of the fig tree told of summer. And in each case the disciples of Jesus must be ready. When the siege came, they should not turn back from the field into the city, nor escape from the housetop by the inner staircase. When the Son of man comes, their loins should be girt, and their lights already burning. But if the end has been so long delayed, and if there were signs by which its approach might be known, how could it be the practical duty of all men, in all the ages, to expect it? What is the meaning of bidding us to learn from the fig tree her parable, which is the approach of summer when her branch becomes tender, and yet asserting that we know not when the time is, that it shall come upon us as a snare, that the Master will surely surprise us, but need not find us unprepared, because all the Church ought to be always ready?

What does it mean, especially when we observe, beneath the surface, that our Lord was conscious of addressing more than that generation, since He declared to the first hearers, "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch?" It is a strange paradox. But yet the history of the Church supplies abundant proof that in no age has the expectation of the Second Advent dis-

appeared, and the faithful have always been mocked by the illusion, or else keen to discern the fact, that He is near, even at the doors. It is not enough to reflect that, for each soul, dissolution has been the preliminary advent of Him who has promised to come again and receive us unto Himself, and the Angel of Death is indeed the Angel of the Covenant. It must be asserted that for the universal Church, the feet of the Lord have been always upon the threshold, and the time has been prolonged only because the Judge *standeth* at the door. The "birth pangs" of which Jesus spoke have never been entirely stilled. And the march of time has not been towards a far-off eternity, but along the margin of that mysterious ocean, by which it must be engulfed at last, and into which, fragment by fragment, the beach it treads is crumbling.

Now this necessity, almost avowed, for giving signs which should only make the Church aware of her Lord's continual nearness, without ever enabling her to assign the date of His actual arrival, is the probable explanation of what has been already remarked, the manner in which the judgment of Jerusalem is made to symbolize the final judgment. But this symbolism makes the warning spoken to that age for ever fruitful. As they were not to linger in the guilty city, so we are to let no earthly interests arrest our flight,—not to turn back, but promptly and resolutely to flee unto the everlasting hills. As they should pray that their flight through the mountains should not be in the winter, so should we beware of needing to seek salvation in the winter of the soul, when the storms of passion and appetite are wildest, when evil habits have made the road slippery under foot, and sophistry and selfwill have hidden the gulfs in a treacherous wreath of snow.

Heedfulness, a sense of surrounding peril and of the danger of the times, is meant to inspire us while we read. The discourse opens with a caution against heresy: "Take heed that no man deceive you." It goes on to caution them against the weakness of their own flesh "Take heed to yourselves, for they shall deliver you up." It bids them watch, because they know not when the time is. And the way to watchfulness is prayerfulness; so that presently, in the Garden, when they could not watch with Him one hour, they were bidden to watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation.

So is the expectant Church to watch and pray. Nor must her mood be one of passive idle expectation, dreamful desire of the promised change, neglect of duties in the interval. The progress of all art and science, and even the culture of the ground, is said to have been arrested by the universal persuasion that the year One Thousand should see the return of Christ. The luxury of millennarian expectation seems even now to relieve some consciences from the active duties of religion. But Jesus taught His followers that on leaving His house, to sojourn in a far country, He regarded them as His servants still, and gave them every one his work. And it is the companion of that disciple to whom Jesus gave the keys, and to whom especially He said, "What, couldest thou not watch with Me one hour?" St. Mark it is who specifies the command to the porter that he should watch. To watch is not to gaze from the roof across the distant roads. It is to have girded loins and a kindled lamp; it is not measured by excited expectation, but by readiness. Does it seem to us that the world is no longer hostile, because persecution and torture are at an end? That

the need is over for a clear distinction between her and us? This very belief may prove that we are falling asleep. Never was there an age to which Jesus did not say Watch. Never one in which His return would be other than a snare to all whose life is on the level of the world.

Now looking back over the whole discourse, we come to ask ourselves, What is the spirit which it sought to breathe into His Church? Clearly it is that of loyal expectation of the Absent One. There is in it no hint, that because we cannot fail to be deceived without Him, therefore His infallibility and His Vicar shall for ever be left on earth. His place is empty until He returns. Whoever says, Lo, here is Christ, is a deceiver, and it proves nothing that he shall deceive many. When Christ is manifested again, it shall be as the blaze of lightning across the sky. There is perhaps no text in this discourse which directly assails the Papacy; but the atmosphere which pervades it is deadly alike to her claims, and to the instincts and desires on which those claims rely.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CRUSE OF OINTMENT.

"Now after two days was *the feast of* the passover and the unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him with subtilty, and kill Him: for they said, Not during the feast, lest haply there shall be a tumult of the people. And while He was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster cruse of ointment of spikenard very costly; *and* she brake the cruse, and poured it over His head. But there were some that had indignation among themselves, *saying*, To what purpose hath this waste of the ointment been made? For this ointment might have been sold for above three hundred pence, and given to the poor. And they murmured against her. But Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on Me. For ye have the poor always with you, and whensoever ye will ye can do them good: but Me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she hath anointed My body aforehand for the burying. And verily I say unto you, Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."—MARK xiv. 1–9 (R.V.).

PERFECTION implies not only the absence of blemishes, but the presence, in equal proportions, of every virtue and every grace. And so the perfect life is full of the most striking, and yet the easiest transitions. We have just read predictions of trial more startling and intense than any in the ancient Scripture. If we knew of Jesus only by the various reports of that discourse, we should think of a recluse like Elijah or the Baptist, and imagine that His dis-

ciples, with girded loins, should be more ascetic than St. Anthony. We are next shown Jesus at a supper gracefully accepting the graceful homage of a woman.

From St. John we learn that this feast was given six days before the passover. The other accounts postponed the mention of it, plainly because of an incident which occurred then, but is vitally connected with a decision arrived at somewhat later by the priests. Two days before the passover, the council finally determined that Jesus must be destroyed. They recognised all the dangers of that course. It must be done with subtlety; the people must not be aroused; and therefore they said, Not on the feast-day. It is remarkable, however, that at the very time when they so determined, Jesus clearly and calmly made to His disciples exactly the opposite announcement. "After two days the passover cometh, and the Son of man is delivered up to be crucified" (Matt. xxvi. 2). Thus we find at every turn of the narrative that their plans are over-ruled, and they are unconscious agents of a mysterious design, which their Victim comprehends and accepts. On one side, perplexity snatches at all base expedients; the traitor is welcomed, false witnesses are sought after, and the guards of the sepulchre bribed. On the other side is clear foresight, the deliberate unmasking of Judas, and at the trial a circumspect composure, a lofty silence, and speech more majestic still.

Meanwhile there is a heart no longer light (for He foresees His burial), yet not so burdened that He should decline the entertainment offered Him at Bethany.

This was in the house of Simon the leper, but St. John tells us that Martha served, Lazarus sat at meat, and the woman who anointed Jesus was Mary. We

naturally infer some relationship between Simon and this favoured family; but the nature of the tie we know not, and no purpose can be served by guessing. Better far to let the mind rest upon the sweet picture of Jesus, at home among those who loved Him; upon the eager service of Martha; upon the man who had known death, somewhat silent, one fancies, a remarkable sight for Jesus, as He sat at meat, and perhaps suggestive of the thought which found utterance a few days afterwards, that a banquet was yet to come, when He also, risen from the grave, should drink new wine among His friends in the kingdom of God. And there the adoring face of her who had chosen the better part was turned to her Lord with a love which comprehended His sorrow and His danger, while even the Twelve were blind—an insight which knew the awful presence of One upon his way to the sepulchre, as well as one who had returned thence. Therefore she produced a cruse of very precious ointment, which had been "kept" for Him, perhaps since her brother was embalmed. And as such alabaster flasks were commonly sealed in making, and only to be opened by breaking off the neck, she crushed the cruse between her hands and poured it on His head. On His feet also, according to St. John, who is chiefly thinking of the embalming of the body, as the others of the anointing of the head. The discovery of contradiction here is worthy of the abject "criticism" which detects in this account a variation upon the story of her who was a sinner. As if two women who loved much might not both express their loyalty, which could not speak, by so fair and feminine a device; or as if it were inconceivable that the blameless Mary should consciously imitate the gentle penitent.

But even as this unworthy controversy breaks in

upon the tender story, so did indignation and murmuring spoil that peaceful scene. "Why was not this ointment sold for much, and given to the poor?" It was not common that others should be more thoughtful of the poor than Jesus.

He fed the multitudes they would have sent away; He gave sight to Bartimæus whom they rebuked. But it is still true, that whenever generous impulses express themselves with lavish hands, some heartless calculator reckons up the value of what is spent, and especially its value to "the poor;" the poor, who would be worse off if the instincts of love were arrested and the human heart frozen. Almshouses are not usually built by those who declaim against church architecture; nor is utilitarianism famous for its charities. And so we are not surprised when St. John tells us how the quarrel was fomented. Iscariot, the dishonest pursebearer, was exasperated at the loss of a chance of theft, perhaps of absconding without being so great a loser at the end of his three unrequited years. True that the chance was gone, and speech would only betray his estrangement from Jesus, upon Whom so much good property was wasted. But evil tempers must express themselves at times, and Judas had craft enough to involve the rest in his misconduct. It is the only indication in the Gospels of intrigue among the Twelve which even indirectly struck at their Master's honour.

Thus, while the fragrance of the ointment filled the house, their parsimony grudged the homage which soothed His heart, and condemned the spontaneous impulse of Mary's love.

It was for her that Jesus interfered, and His words went home.

The poor were always with them: opportunities

would never fail those who were so zealous; and whensoever they would they could do them good,—whensoever Judas, for example, would. As for her, she had wrought a good work (a high-minded and lofty work is implied rather than a useful one) upon Him, Whom they should not always have. Soon His body would be in the hands of sinners, desecrated, outraged. And she only had comprehended, however dimly, the silent sorrow of her Master; she only had laid to heart His warnings; and, unable to save Him, or even to watch with Him one hour, she (and through all that week none other) had done what she could. She had anointed His body beforehand for the burial, and indeed with clear intention "to prepare Him for burial" (Matt. xxvi. 12).

It was for this that His followers had chidden her. Alas, how often do our shrewd calculations and harsh judgments miss the very essence of some problem which only the heart can solve, the silent intention of some deed which is too fine, too sensitive, to explain itself except only to that sympathy which understands us all. Men thought of Jesus as lacking nothing, and would fain divert His honour to the poor; but this woman comprehended the lonely heart, and saw the last inexorable need before Him. Love read the secret in the eyes of love, and this which Mary did shall be told while the world stands, as being among the few human actions which refreshed the lonely One, the purest, the most graceful, and perhaps the last.

THE TRAITOR.

"And Judas Iscariot, he that was one of the twelve, went away unto the chief priests, that he might deliver Him unto them. And they, when they heard it, were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently deliver Him *unto them.* And on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the passover, His disciples say unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we go and make ready that Thou mayest eat the passover? And He sendeth two of His disciples, and saith unto them, Go into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him; and wheresoever he shall enter in, say to the goodman of the house, the Master saith, Where is My guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples? And he will himself shew you a large upper room furnished and ready: and there make ready for us. And the disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the passover."—MARK xiv. 10–16 (R.V.).

It was when Jesus rebuked the Twelve for censuring Mary, that the patience of Judas, chafing in a service which had grown hateful, finally gave way. He offered a treacherous and odious help to the chiefs of his religion, and these pious men, too scrupulous to cast blood-money into the treasury or to defile themselves by entering a pagan judgment hall, shuddered not at the contact of such infamy, warned him not that perfidy will pollute the holiest cause, cared as little then for his ruin as when they asked what to them was his remorseful agony; but were glad, and promised to give him money. By so doing, they became accomplices in the only crime by which it is quite certain that a soul was lost. The supreme "offence" was planned and perpetrated by no desperate criminal. It was the work of an apostle, and his accomplices were the heads of a divinely given religion. What an awful example of the deadening power, palsying the

conscience, petrifying the heart, of religious observances devoid of real trust and love.

The narrative, as we saw, somewhat displaced the story of Simon's feast, to connect this incident more closely with the betrayal. And it now proceeds at once to the passover, and the final crisis. In so doing, it pauses at a curious example of circumspection, intimately linked also with the treason of Judas. The disciples, unconscious of treachery, asked where they should prepare the paschal supper. And Jesus gave them a sign by which to recognise one who had a large upper room prepared for that purpose, to which he would make them welcome. It is not quite impossible that the pitcher of water was a signal preconcerted with some disciple in Jerusalem, although secret understandings are not found elsewhere in the life of Jesus. What concerns us to observe is that the owner of the house which the bearer entered was a believer. To him Jesus is "the Master," and can say "Where is My guest-chamber?"

So obscure a disciple was he, that Peter and John required a sign to guide them to his house. Yet his upper room would now receive such a consecration as the Temple never knew. With strange feelings would he henceforth enter the scene of the last supper of his Lord. But now, what if he had only admitted Jesus with hesitation and after long delay? We should wonder; yet there are lowlier doors at which the same Jesus stands and knocks, and would fain come in and sup. And cold is His welcome to many a chamber which is neither furnished nor made ready.

The mysterious and reticent indication of the place is easily understood. Jesus would not enable His enemies to lay hands upon Him before the time. His

nights had hitherto been spent at Bethany; now first it was possible to arrest Him in the darkness, and hurry on the trial before the Galileans at the feast, strangers and comparatively isolated, could learn the danger of their "prophet of Galilee." It was only too certain that when the blow was struck, the light and fickle adhesion of the populace would transfer itself to the successful party. Meanwhile, the prudence of Jesus gave Him time for the Last Supper, and the wonderful discourse recorded by St. John, and the conflict and victory in the Garden. When the priests learned, at a late hour, that Jesus might yet be arrested before morning, but that Judas could never watch Him any more, the necessity for prompt action came with such surprise upon them, that the arrest was accomplished while they still had to seek false witnesses, and to consult how a sentence might best be extorted from the Governor. It is right to observe at every point, the mastery of Jesus, the perplexity and confusion of His foes.

And it is also right that we should learn to include, among the woes endured for us by the Man of Sorrows, this haunting consciousness that a base vigilance was to be watched against, that He breathed the air of treachery and vileness.

Here then, in view of the precautions thus forced upon our Lord, we pause to reflect upon the awful fall of Judas, the degradation of an apostle into a hireling, a traitor, and a spy. Men have failed to believe that one whom Jesus called to His side should sink so low.

They have not observed how inevitably great goodness rejected brings out special turpitude, and dark shadows go with powerful lights; how, in this supreme tragedy, all the motives, passions, moral and immoral

impulses are on the tragic scale; what gigantic forms of baseness, hypocrisy, cruelty, and injustice stalk across the awful platform, and how the forces of hell strip themselves, and string their muscles for a last desperate wrestle against the powers of heaven, so that here is the very place to expect the extreme apostasy. And so they have conjectured that Iscariot was only half a traitor. Some project misled him of forcing his Master to turn to bay. Then the powers which wasted themselves in scattering unthanked and unprofitable blessings would exert themselves to crush the foe. Then he could claim for himself the credit deserved by much astuteness, the consideration due to the only man of political resource among the Twelve. But this well-intending Judas is equally unknown to the narratives and the prophecies, and this theory does not harmonise with any of the facts. Profound reprobation and even contempt are audible in all the narratives; they are quite as audible in the reiterated phrase, "which was one of the Twelve," and in almost every mention of his name, as in the round assertion of St. John, that he was a thief and stole from the common purse. Only the lowest motive is discernible in the fact that his project ripened just when the waste of the ointment spoiled his last hope from apostleship,—the hope of unjust gain, and in his bargaining for the miserable price which he still carried with him when the veil dropped from his inner eyes, when he awoke to the sorrow of the world which worketh death, to the remorse which was not penitence.

One who desired that Jesus should be driven to counter-measures and yet free to take them, would probably have favoured His escape when once the attempt to arrest Him inflicted the necessary spur

and certainly he would have anxiously avoided any appearance of insult. But it will be seen that Judas carefully closed every door against his Lord's escape, and seized Him with something very like a jibe on his recreant lips.

No, his infamy cannot be palliated, but it can be understood. For it is a solemn and awful truth, that in every defeat of grace the reaction is equal to the action; they who have been exalted unto heaven are brought down far below the level of the world; and the principle is universal that Israel cannot, by willing it, be as the nations that are round about, to serve other gods. God Himself gives him statutes that are not good. He makes fat the heart and blinds the eyes of the apostate. Therefore it comes that religion without devotion is the mockery of honest worldlings; that hypocrisy goes so constantly with the meanest and most sordid lust of gain, and selfish cruelty; that publicans and harlots enter heaven before scribes and pharisees; that salt which has lost its savour is fit neither for the land nor for the dung-hill. Oh, then, to what place of shame shall a recreant apostle be thrust down?

Moreover it must be observed that the guilt of Judas, however awful, is but a shade more dark than that of his sanctimonious employers, who sought false witnesses against Christ, extorted by menace and intrigue a sentence which Pilate openly pronounced to be unjust, mocked His despairing agony, and on the resurrection morning bribed a pagan soldiery to lie for the Hebrew faith. It is plain enough that Jesus could not and did not choose the apostles through foreknowledge of what they would hereafter prove, but by His perception of what they then were, and what they were capable of becoming, if faithful to the light they should receive.

Not one, when chosen first, was ready to welcome the purely spiritual kingdom, the despised Messiah, the life of poverty and scorn. They had to learn, and it was open to them to refuse the discipline. Once at least they were asked, Will ye also go away? How severe was the trial may be seen by the rebuke of Peter, and the petition of "Zebedee's children" and their mother. They conquered the same reluctance of the flesh which overcame the better part in Judas. But he clung desperately to secular hope, until the last vestige of such hope was over. Listening to the warnings of Christ against the cares of this world, the lust of other things, love of high places and contempt of lowly service, and watching bright offers rejected and influential classes estranged, it was inevitable that a sense of personal wrong, and a vindictive resentment, should spring up in his gloomy heart. The thorns choked the good seed. Then came a deeper fall. As he rejected the pure light of self-sacrifice, and the false light of his romantic daydreams faded, no curb was left on the baser instincts which are latent in the human heart. Self-respect being already lost, and conscience beaten down, he was allured by low compensations, and the apostle became a thief. What better than gain, however sordid, was left to a life so plainly frustrated and spoiled? That is the temptation of disillusion, as fatal to middle life as the passions are to early manhood. And this fall reacted again upon his attitude towards Jesus. Like all who will not walk in the light, he hated the light; like all hirelings of two masters, he hated the one he left. Men ask how Judas could have consented to accept for Jesus the bloodmoney of a slave. The truth is that his treason itself yielded him a dreadful satisfaction, and the insulting kiss, and the

sneering "Rabbi," expressed the malice of his heart. Well for him if he had never been born. For when his conscience awoke with a start and told him what thing he had become, only self-loathing remained to him. Peter denying Jesus was nevertheless at heart His own; a look sufficed to melt him. For Judas, Christ was become infinitely remote and strange, an abstraction, "the innocent blood," no more than that. And so, when Jesus was passing into the holiest through the rent veil which was His flesh, this first Antichrist had already torn with his own hands the tissue of the curtain which hides eternity.

Now let us observe that all this ruin was the result of forces continually at work upon human hearts. Aspiration, vocation, failure, degradation—it is the summary of a thousand lives. Only it is here exhibited on a vast and dreadful scale (magnified by the light which was behind, as images thrown by a lantern upon a screen) for the instruction and warning of the world.

THE SOP.

"And when it was evening He cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and were eating, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you shall betray Me, *even* he that eateth with Me. They began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, Is it I? And He said unto them, *It is* one of the twelve, he that dippeth with Me in the dish. For the Son of man goeth, even as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had not been born."—MARK xiv. 17–21 (R.V.).

IN the deadly wine which our Lord was made to drink, every ingredient of mortal bitterness was mingled. And it shows how far is even His Church from comprehending Him, that we think so much more of the

physical than the mental and spiritual horrors which gather around the closing scene.

But the tone of all the narratives, and perhaps especially of St. Mark's, is that of the exquisite Collect which reminds us that our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men, as well as to suffer death on the cross. Treason and outrage, the traitor's kiss and the weakness of those who loved Him, the hypocrisy of the priest and the ingratitude of the mob, perjury and a mock trial, the injustice of His judges, the brutal outrages of the soldiers, the worse and more malignant mockery of scribe and Pharisee, and last and direst, the averting of the face of God, these were more dreadful to Jesus than the scourging and the nails.

And so there is great stress laid upon His anticipation of the misconduct of His own.

As the dreadful evening closes in, having come to the guest chamber "with the Twelve"—eleven whose hearts should fail them and one whose heart was dead, it was "as they sat and were eating" that the oppression of the traitor's hypocrisy became intolerable, and the outraged One spoke out. "Verily I say unto you, One of you shall betray Me, even he that eateth with Me." The words are interpreted as well as predicted in the plaintive Psalm which says, "Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did also eat of My bread, hath lifted up his heel against Me." And perhaps they are less a disclosure than a cry.

Every attempt to mitigate the treason of Judas, every suggestion that he may only have striven too wilfully to serve our Lord by forcing Him to take decided measures, must fail to account for the sense of utter wrong which breathes in the simple and piercing

complaint "one of you . . . even he that eateth with Me." There is a tone in all the narratives which is at variance with any palliation of the crime.

No theology is worth much if it fails to confess, at the centre of all the words and deeds of Jesus, a great and tender human heart. He might have spoken of teaching and warnings lavished on the traitor, and miracles which he had beheld in vain. What weighs heaviest on His burdened spirit is none of these; it is that one should betray Him who had eaten His bread.

When Brutus was dying he is made to say—

> "My heart doth joy, that yet, in all my life,
> I found no man, but he was true to me."

But no form of innocent sorrow was to pass Jesus by.

The vagueness in the words "one of you shall betray Me," was doubtless intended to suggest in all a great searching of heart. Coming just before the institution of the Eucharistic feast, this incident anticipates the command which it perhaps suggested: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." It is good to be distrustful of one's self. And if, as was natural, the Eleven looked one upon another doubting of whom He spake, they also began to say to Him, one by one (first the most timid, and then others as the circle narrowed), Is it I? For the prince of this world had something in each of them,—some frailty there was, some reluctance to bear the yoke, some longing for the forbidden ways of worldliness, which alarmed each at this solemn warning, and made him ask, Is it, can it be possible, that it is I? Religious self-sufficiency was not then the apostolic mood. Their questioning is also remarkable as a proof how little they suspected Judas, how firmly he bore himself even

as those all-revealing words were spoken, how strong and wary was the temperament which Christ would fain have sanctified. For between the Master and him there could have been no more concealment.

The apostles were right to distrust themselves, and not to distrust another. They were right, because they were so feeble, so unlike their Lord. But for Him there is no misgiving: His composure is serene in the hour of the power of darkness. And His perfect spiritual sensibility discerned the treachery, unknown to others, as instinctively as the eye resents the presence of a mote imperceptible to the hand.

The traitor's iron nerve is somewhat strained as he feels himself discovered, and when Jesus is about to hand a sop to him, he stretches over, and their hands meet in the dish. That is the appointed sign: "It is one of the Twelve, he that dippeth with Me in the dish," and as he rushes out into the darkness, to seek his accomplices and his revenge, Jesus feels the awful contrast between the betrayer and the Betrayed. For Himself, He goeth as it is written of Him. This phrase admirably expresses the co-operation of Divine purpose and free human will, and by the woe that follows He refutes all who would make of God's fore-knowledge an excuse for human sin. He then is not walking in the dark and stumbling, though men shall think Him falling. But the life of the false one is worse than utterly cast away: of him is spoken the dark and ominous word, never indisputably certain of any other soul, "Good were it for him if that man had not been born."

"That man!" The order and emphasis are very strange. The Lord, who felt and said that one of His chosen was a devil, seems here to lay stress upon the

warning thought, that he who fell so low was human, and his frightful ruin was evolved from none but human capabilities for good and evil. In "the Son of man" and "that man," the same humanity was to be found.

For Himself, He is the same to-day as yesterday. All that we eat is His. And in the most especial and far-reaching sense, it is His bread which is broken for us at His table. Has He never seen traitor except one who violated so close a bond? Alas, the night when the Supper of the Lord was given was the same night when He was betrayed.

BREAD AND WINE.

"And as they were eating, He took bread, and when He had blessed, He brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take ye: this is My body. And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave to them: and they all drank of it. And He said unto them, This is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."—MARK xiv. 22-25 (R.V.).

How much does the Gospel of St. Mark tell us about the Supper of the Lord? He is writing to Gentiles. He is writing probably before the sixth chapter of St. John was penned, certainly before it reached his readers. Now we must not undervalue the reflected light thrown by one Scripture upon another. Still less may we suppose that each account conveys all the doctrine of the Eucharist. But it is obvious that St. Mark intended his narrative to be complete in itself, even if not exhaustive. No serious expositor will ignore the fulness of any word or action in which later experience can discern meanings, truly involved, although not apparent at the first. That would be to deny the inspiring guidance of Him who sees the

end from the beginning. But it is reasonable to omit from the interpretation of St. Mark whatever is not either explicitly there, or else there in germ, waiting underneath the surface for other influences to develope it. For instance, the "remembrance" of Christ in St. Paul's narrative may (or it may not) mean a sacrificial memorial to God of His Body and His Blood. If it be, this notion was to be conveyed to the readers of this Gospel hereafter, as a quite new fact, resting upon other authority. It has no place whatever here, and need only be mentioned to point out that St. Mark did not feel bound to convey the slightest hint of it. A communion, therefore, could be profitably celebrated by persons who had no glimmering of any such conception. Nor does he rely, for an understanding of his narrative, upon such familiarity with Jewish ritual as would enable his readers to draw subtle analogies as they went along. They were so ignorant of these observances that he had just explained to them on what day the passover was sacrificed (ver. 12).

But this narrative conveys enough to make the Lord's Supper, for every believing heart, the supreme help to faith, both intellectual and spiritual, and the mightiest of promises, and the richest gift of grace.

It is hard to imagine that any reader would conceive that the bread in Christ's hands had become His body, which still lived and breathed; or that His blood, still flowing in His veins, was also in the cup He gave to His disciples. No resort could be made to the glorification of the risen Body as an escape from the perplexities of such a notion, for in whatever sense the words are true, they were spoken of the body of His humiliation, before which still lay the agony and the tomb.

Instinct would revolt yet more against such a gross

explanation, because the friends of Jesus are bidden to eat and drink. And all the analogy of Christ's language would prove that His vivid style refuses to be tied down to so lifeless and mechanical a treatment. Even in this Gospel they could discover that seed was teaching, and fowls were Satan, and that they were themselves His mother and His brethren. Further knowledge of Scripture would not impair this natural freedom of interpretation. For they would discover that if animated language were to be frozen to such literalism, the partakers of the Supper were themselves, though many, one body and one loaf, that Onesimus was St. Paul's very heart, that leaven is hypocrisy, that Hagar is Mount Sinai, and that the veil of the temple is the flesh of Christ (1 Cor. x. 17; Philem. ver. 12; Luke xii. 1; Gal. iv. 25; Heb. x. 20). And they would also find, in the analogous institution of the paschal feast, a similar use of language (Exod. xii. 11).

But when they had failed to discern the doctrine of a transubstantiation, how much was left to them. The great words remained, in all their spirit and life, "Take ye, this is My Body . . . this is My Blood of the Covenant, which is shed for many."

(1) So then, Christ did not look forward to His death as to ruin or overthrow. The Supper is an institution which could never have been devised at any later period. It comes to us by an unbroken line from the Founder's hand, and attested by the earliest witnesses. None could have interpolated a new ordinance into the simple worship of the early Church, and the last to suggest such a possibility should be those sceptics who are deeply interested in exaggerating the estrangements which existed from the first, and which made

the Jewish Church a keen critic of Gentile innovation, and the Gentiles of a Jewish novelty.

Nor could any genius have devised its vivid and pictorial earnestness, its copious meaning, and its pathetic power over the heart, except His, Who spoke of the Good Shepherd and of the Prodigal Son. And so it tells us plainly what Christ thought about His own death. Death is to most of us simply the close of life. To Him it was itself an achievement, and a supreme one. Now it is possible to remember with exultation a victory which cost the conqueror's life. But on the Friday which we call Good, nothing happened except the crucifixion. The effect on the Church, which is amazing and beyond dispute, is produced by the death of her Founder, and by nothing else. The Supper has no reference to Christ's resurrection. It is as if the nation exulted in Trafalgar, not in spite of the death of our great Admiral, but solely because he died; as if the shot which slew Nelson had itself been the overthrow of hostile navies. Now the history of religions offers no parallel to this. The admirers of the Buddha love to celebrate the long spiritual struggle, the final illumination, and the career of gentle helpfulness. They do not derive life and energy from the somewhat vulgar manner of his death. But the followers of Jesus find an inspiration (very displeasing to some recent apostles of good taste) in singing of their Redeemer's blood. Remove from the Creed (which does not even mention His three years of teaching) the proclamation of His death, and there may be left, dimly visible to man, the outline of a sage among the sages, but there will be no longer a Messiah, nor a Church. It is because He was lifted up that He draws all men unto Him. The perpetual nourishment of the Church, her bread and wine,

are beyond question the slain body of her Master and His blood poured out for man.

What are we to make of this admitted fact, that from the first she thought less of His miracles, His teaching, and even of His revelation of the Divine character in a perfect life, than of the doctrine that He who thus lived, died for the men who slew Him? And what of this, that Jesus Himself, in the presence of imminent death, when men review their lives and set a value on their achievements, embodied in a solemn ordinance the conviction that all He had taught and done was less to man than what He was about to suffer? The Atonement is here proclaimed as a cardinal fact in our religion, not worked out into doctrinal subtleties, but placed with marvellous simplicity and force, in the forefront of the consciousness of the simplest. What the Incarnation does for our bewildering thoughts of God, the absolute and unconditioned, that does the Eucharist for our subtle reasonings upon the Atonement.

(2) The death of Christ is thus precious, because He Who is sacrificed for us can give Himself away. "Take ye" is a distinct offer. And so the communion feast is not a mere commemoration, such as nations hold for great deliverances. It is this, but it is much more, else the language of Christ would apply worse to that first supper whence all our Eucharistic language is derived, than to any later celebration. When He was absent, the bread would very aptly remind them of His wounded body, and the wine of His blood poured out. It might naturally be said, Henceforward, to your loving remembrance this shall be my Body, as indeed, the words, As oft as ye drink it, are actually linked with the injunction to do this in remembrance. But scarcely could it have been said by Jesus, looking His disciples

in the face, that the elements were then His body and blood, if nothing more than commemoration were in His mind. And so long as popular Protestantism fails to look beyond this, so long will it be hard pressed and harassed by the evident weight of the words of institution. These are given in Scripture solely as having been spoken then, and no interpretation is valid which attends chiefly to subsequent celebrations, and only in the second place to the Supper of Jesus and the Eleven.

Now the most strenuous opponent of the doctrine that any change has passed over the material substance of the bread and wine, need not resist the palpable evidence that Christ appointed these to represent Himself. And how? Not only as sacrificed for His people, but as verily bestowed upon them. Unless Christ mocks us, "Take ye" is a word of absolute assurance. Christ's Body is not only slain, and His Blood shed on our behalf; He gives Himself *to* us as well as *for* us; He is ours. And therefore whoever is convinced that he may take part in "the sacrament of so great a mystery" should realize that he there receives, conveyed to him by the Author of that wondrous feast, all that is expressed by the bread and wine.

(3) And yet this very word "Take ye," demands our co-operation in the sacrament. It requires that we should receive Christ, as it declares that He is ready to impart Himself, utterly, like food which is taken into the system, absorbed, assimilated, wrought into bone, into tissue and into blood. And if any doubt lingered in our minds of the significance of this word, it is removed when we remember how belief is identified with feeding, in St. John's Gospel. "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. . . . He that

believeth hath eternal life. I am the bread of life." (John vi. 35, 47, 48.) If it follows that to feed upon Christ is to believe, it also follows quite as plainly that belief is not genuine unless it really feeds upon Christ.

It is indeed impossible to imagine a more direct and vigorous appeal to man to have faith in Christ than this, that He formally conveys, by the agency of His Church, to the hands and lips of His disciples, the appointed emblem of Himself, and of Himself in the act of blessing them. For the emblem is food in its most nourishing and in its most stimulating form, in a form the best fitted to speak of utter self-sacrifice, by the bruised corn of broken bread, and by the solemn resemblance to His sacred blood. We are taught to see, in the absolute absorption of our food into our bodily system, a type of the completeness wherewith Christ gives Himself to us.

That gift is not to the Church in the gross, it is "divided among" us; it individualizes each believer; and yet the common food expresses the unity of the whole Church in Christ. Being many we are one bread.

Moreover, the institution of a meal reminds us that faith and emotion do not always exist together. Times there are when the hunger and thirst of the soul are like the craving of a sharp appetite for food. But the wise man will not postpone his meal until such a keen desire returns, and the Christian will seek for the Bread of life, however his emotions may flag, and his soul cleave unto the dust. Silently and often unaware, as the substance of the body is renovated and restored by food, shall the inner man be strengthened and built up by that living Bread.

(4) We have yet to ask the great question, what is the specific blessing expressed by the elements, and

therefore surely given to the faithful by the sacrament. Too many are content to think vaguely of Divine help, given us for the merit of the death of Christ. But bread and wine do not express an indefinite Divine help, they express the body and blood of Christ, they have to do with His Humanity. We must beware, indeed, of limiting the notion overmuch. At the Supper He said not "My flesh," but "My body," which is plainly a more comprehensive term. And in the discourse when He said My Flesh is meat indeed," He also said "I am the bread of life. . . . He that eateth Me, the same shall live by Me." And we may not so carnalize the Body as to exclude the Person, who bestows Himself. Yet is all the language so constructed as to force the conviction upon us that His body and blood, His Humanity, is the special gift of the Lord's Supper. As man He redeemed us, and as man He imparts Himself to man.

Thus we are led up to the sublime conception of a new human force working in humanity. As truly as the life of our parents is in our veins, and the corruption which they inherited from Adam is passed on to us, so truly there is abroad in the world another influence, stronger to elevate than the infection of the fall is to degrade; and the heart of the Church is propelling to its utmost extremities the pure life of the Second Adam, the Second Man, the new Father of the race. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; and we who bear now the image of our earthy progenitor shall hereafter bear the image of the heavenly. Meanwhile, even as the waste and dead tissues of our bodily frame are replaced by new material from every meal, so does He, the living Bread, impart not only aid from heaven, but nourishment, strength to our poor

human nature, so weary and exhausted, and renovation to what is sinful and decayed. How well does such a doctrine of the sacrament harmonize with the declarations of St. Paul: "I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." "The Head, from whom all the body being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God" (Gal. ii 20; Col. ii 19).

(5) In the brief narrative of St. Mark, there are a few minor points of interest.

Fasting communions may possibly be an expression of reverence only. The moment they are pressed further, or urged as a duty, they are strangely confronted by the words, "While they were eating, Jesus took bread."

The assertion that "they all drank," follows from the express commandment recorded elsewhere. And while we remember that the first communicants were not laymen, yet the emphatic insistence upon this detail, and with reference only to the cup, is entirely at variance with the Roman notion of the completeness of a communion in one kind.

It is most instructive also to observe how the far-reaching expectation of our Lord looks beyond the Eleven, and beyond His infant Church, forward to the great multitude which no man can number, and speaks of the shedding of His blood "for many." He, who is to see of the travail of His soul and to be satisfied, has already spoken of a great supper when the house of God shall be filled. And now He will no more drink of the fruit of the vine until that great day when the marriage of the Lamb having come, and His Bride having made herself ready, He shall drink it new in the consummated kingdom of God.

With the announcement of that kingdom He began His gospel: how could the mention of it be omitted from the great gospel of the Eucharist? or how could the Giver of the earthly feast be silent concerning the banquet yet to come?

THE WARNING

"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad. Howbeit, after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that thou to-day, *even* this night, before the cock crow twice, shalt deny me thrice. But he spake exceeding vehemently, If I must die with Thee, I will not deny Thee. And in like manner also said they all."—MARK xiv. 26-31 (R.V.).

SOME uncertainty attaches to the position of Christ's warning to the Eleven in the narrative of the last evening. Was it given at the supper, or on Mount Olivet; or were there perhaps premonitory admonitions on His part, met by vows of faithfulness on theirs, which at last led Him to speak out so plainly, and elicited such vainglorious protestations, when they sat together in the night air?

What concerns us more is the revelation of a calm and beautiful nature, at every point in the narrative. Jesus knows and has declared that His life is now closing, and His blood already "being shed for many." But that does not prevent Him from joining with them in singing a hymn. It is the only time when we are told that our Saviour sang, evidently because no other occasion needed mention; a warning to those who draw confident inferences from such facts as that "none

ever said He smiled," or that there is no record of His having been sick. It would surprise such theorists to observe the number of biographies much longer than any of the Gospels, which also mention nothing of the kind. The Psalms usually sung at the close of the feast are cxv. and the three following. The first tells how the dead praise not the Lord, but we will praise Him from this time forth for ever. The second proclaims that the Lord hath delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. The third bids all the nations praise the Lord, for his merciful kindness is great and His truth endureth for ever. And the fourth rejoices because, although all nations compassed me about, yet I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord; and because the stone which the builders rejected is become the head stone of the corner. Memories of infinite sadness were awakened by the words which had so lately rung around His path: "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord;" but His voice was strong to sing, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar;" and it rose to the exultant close, "Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee: Thou art my God, I will exalt Thee. O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever."

This hymn, from the lips of the Perfect One, could be no "dying swan-song." It uplifted that more than heroic heart to the wonderful tranquillity which presently said, "When I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee." It is full of victory. And now they go unto the Mount of Olives.

Is it enough considered how much of the life of Jesus was passed in the open air? He preached on the hill side; He desired that a boat should be at His

command upon the lake; He prayed upon the mountain; He was transfigured beside the snows of Hermon; He oft-times resorted to a garden which had not yet grown awful; He met His disciples on a Galilean mountain; and He finally ascended from the Mount of Olives. His unartificial normal life, a pattern to us, not as students but as men—was spent by preference neither in the study nor the street.

In this crisis, most solemn and yet most calm, He leaves the crowded city into which all the tribes had gathered, and chooses for His last intercourse with His disciples, the slopes of the opposite hill side, while overhead is glowing, in all the still splendour of an Eastern sky, the full moon of Passover. Here then is the place for one more emphatic warning. Think how He loved them. As His mind reverts to the impending blow, and apprehends it in its most awful form, the very buffet of God Who Himself will smite the Shepherd, He remembers to warn His disciples of their weakness. We feel it to be gracious that He should think of them at such a time. But if we drew a little nearer, we should almost hear the beating of the most loving heart that ever broke. They were all He had. In them He had confided utterly. Even as the Father had loved Him, He also had loved them, the firstfruits of the travail of His soul. He had ceased to call them servants and had called them friends. To them He had spoken those affecting words, "Ye are they which have continued with me in My temptations." How intensely He clung to their sympathy, imperfect though it was, is best seen by His repeated appeals to it in the Agony. And He knew that they loved Him, that the spirit was willing, that they would weep and lament for Him, sorrowing

with a sorrow which He hastened to add that He would turn into joy.

It is the preciousness of their fellowship which reminds Him how this, like all else, must fail Him. If there is blame in the words, "Ye shall be offended," this passes at once into exquisite sadness when He adds that He, Who so lately said, "Them that Thou gavest Me, I have guarded," should Himself be the cause of their offence, "All ye shall be caused to stumble because of Me." And there is an unfathomable tenderness, a marvellous allowance for their frailty in what follows. They were His sheep, and therefore as helpless, as little to be relied upon, as sheep when the shepherd is stricken. How natural it was for sheep to be scattered.

The world has no parallel for such a warning to comrades who are about to leave their leader, so faithful and yet so tender, so far from estrangement or reproach.

If it stood alone it would prove the Founder of the Church to be not only a great teacher, but a genuine Son of man.

For Himself, He does not share their weakness, nor apply to Himself the lesson of distrustfulness which He teaches them; He is of another nature from these trembling sheep, the Shepherd of Zechariah, "Who is My fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." He does not shrink from applying to Himself this text, which awakens against Him the sword of God (Zechariah xiii. 7).

Looking now beyond the grave to the resurrection, and unestranged by their desertion, He resumes at once the old relation; for as the shepherd goeth before his sheep, and they follow him, so He will go before

them into Galilee, to the familiar places, far from the city where men hate Him.

This last touch of quiet human feeling completes an utterance too beautiful, too characteristic to be spurious, yet a prophecy, and one which attests the ancient predictions, and which involves an amazing claim.

At first sight it is surprising that the Eleven who were lately so conscious of weakness that each asked was he the traitor, should since have become too self-confident to profit by a solemn admonition. But a little examination shows the two statements to be quite consistent. They had wronged themselves by that suspicion, and never is self-reliance more boastful than when it is reassured after being shaken. The institution of the Sacrament had invested them with new privileges, and drawn them nearer than ever to their Master. Add to this the infinite tenderness of the last discourse in St. John, and the prayer which was for them and not for the world. How did their hearts burn within them as He said, "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me." How incredible must it then have seemed to them, thrilling with real sympathy and loyal gratitude, that they should forsake such a Master.

Nor must we read in their words merely a loud and indignant self-assertion, all unworthy of the time and scene. They were meant to be a solemn vow. The love they professed was genuine and warm. Only they forgot their weakness; they did not observe the words which declared them to be helpless sheep entirely dependent on the Shepherd, whose support would speedily seem to fail.

Instead of harsh and unbecoming criticism, which

repeats almost exactly their fault by implying that we should not yield to the same pressure, let us learn the lesson, that religious exaltation, a sense of special privilege, and the glow of generous emotions, have their own danger. Unless we continue to be as little children, receiving the Bread of Life, without any pretence to have deserved it, and conscious still that our only protection is the staff of our Shepherd, then the very notion that we are something, when we are nothing, will betray us to defeat and shame.

Peter is the loudest in his protestations; and there is a painful egoism in his boast, that even if the others fail, he will never deny Him. So in the storm, it is he who should be called across the waters. And so an early reading makes him propose that he alone should build the tabernacles for the wondrous Three.

Naturally enough, this egoism stimulates the rest. For them, Peter is among those who may fail, while each is confident that he himself cannot. Thus the pride of one excites the pride of many.

But Christ has a special humiliation to reveal for his special self-assertion. That day, and even before that brief night was over, before the second cock-crowing ("the cock-crow" of the rest, being that which announced the dawn) he shall deny his Master twice. Peter does not observe that his eager contradictions are already denying the Master's profoundest claims. The others join in his renewed protestations, and their Lord answers them no more. Since they refuse to learn from Him, they must be left to the stern schooling of experience. Even before the betrayal, they had an opportunity to judge how little their good intentions might avail. For Jesus now enters Gethsemane.

IN THE GARDEN.

"And they come unto a place which was named Gethsemane: and He saith unto His disciples, Sit ye here, while I pray. And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly amazed, and sore troubled. And He saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death: abide ye here, and watch. And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from Him. And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee: remove this cup from Me: howbeit not what I will, but what Thou wilt. And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And again He went away, and prayed, saying the same words. And again He came, and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they wist not what to answer Him. And He cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough; the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going: behold, he that betrayeth Me is at hand."—MARK xiv. 32–42 (R.V.).

ALL Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable; yet must we approach with reverence and solemn shrinking, the story of our Saviour's anguish. It is a subject for caution and for reticence, putting away all over-curious surmise, all too-subtle theorizing, and choosing to say too little rather than too much.

It is possible so to argue about the metaphysics of the Agony as to forget that a suffering human heart was there, and that each of us owes his soul to the victory which was decided if not completed in that fearful place. The Evangelists simply tell us how He suffered.

Let us begin with the accessories of the scene, and gradually approach the centre.

In the warning of Jesus to His disciples there was an undertone of deep sorrow. God will smite Him, and

they will all be scattered like sheep. However dauntless be the purport of such words, it is impossible to lose sight of their melancholy. And when the Eleven rejected His prophetic warning, and persisted in trusting the hearts He knew to be so fearful, their professions of loyalty could only deepen His distress, and intensify His isolation.

In silence He turns to the deep gloom of the olive grove, aware now of the approach of the darkest and deadliest assault.

There was a striking contrast between the scene of His first temptation and His last; and His experience was exactly the reverse of that of the first Adam, who began in a garden, and was driven thence into the desert, because he failed to refuse himself one pleasure more beside ten thousand. Jesus began where the transgression of men had driven them, in the desert among the wild beasts, and resisted not a luxury, but the passion of hunger craving for bread. Now He is in a garden, but how different from theirs. Close by is a city filled with foemen, whose messengers are already on His track. Instead of the attraction of a fruit good for food, and pleasant, and to be desired to make one wise, there is the grim repulsion of death, and its anguish, and its shame and mockery. He is now to be assailed by the utmost terrors of the flesh and of the spirit. And like the temptation in the wilderness, the assault is three times renewed.

As the dark "hour" approached, Jesus confessed the two conflicting instincts of our human nature in its extremity—the desire of sympathy, and the desire of solitude. Leaving eight of the disciples at some distance, He led still nearer to the appointed place His elect of His election, on whom He had so often bestowed

special privilege, and whose faith would be less shaken by the sight of His human weakness, because they had beheld His Divine glory on the holy mount. To these He opened His heart. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; abide ye here and watch." And He went from them a little. Their neighbourhood was a support in His dreadful conflict, and He could at times return to them for sympathy; but they might not enter with Him into the cloud, darker and deadlier than that which they feared on Hermon. He would fain not be desolate, and yet He must be alone.

But when He returned, they were asleep. As Jesus spoke of watching for one hour, some time had doubtless elapsed. And sorrow is exhausting. If the spirit do not seek for support from God, it will be dragged down by the flesh into heavy sleep, and the brief and dangerous respite of oblivion.

It was the failure of Peter which most keenly affected Jesus, not only because his professions had been so loud, but because much depended on his force of character. Thus, when Satan had desired to have them, that he might sift them all like wheat, the prayers of Jesus were especially for Simon, and it was he when he was converted who should strengthen the rest. Surely then he at least might have watched one hour. And what of John, His nearest human friend, whose head had reposed upon His bosom? However keen the pang, the lips of the Perfect Friend were silent; only He warned them all alike to watch and pray, because they were themselves in danger of temptation.

That is a lesson for all time. No affection and no zeal are a substitute for the presence of God realised, and the protection of God invoked. Loyalty and love are not enough without watchfulness and prayer, for

even when the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak, and needs to be upheld.

Thus, in His severest trial and heaviest oppression, there is neither querulousness nor invective, but a most ample recognition of their good will, a most generous allowance for their weakness, a most sedulous desire, not that He should be comforted, but that they should escape temptation.

With His yearning heart unsoothed, with another anxiety added to His heavy burden, Jesus returned to His vigil. Three times He felt the wound of unrequited affection, for their eyes were very heavy, and they wist not what to answer Him when He spoke.

Nor should we omit to contrast their bewildered stupefaction, with the keen vigilance and self-possession of their more heavily burdened Lord.

If we reflect that Jesus must needs experience all the sorrows that human weakness and human wickedness could inflict, we may conceive of these varied wrongs as circles with a common centre, on which the cross was planted. And our Lord has now entered the first of these; He has looked for pity but there was no man; His own, although it was grief which pressed them down, slept in the hour of His anguish, and when He bade them watch.

It is right to observe that our Saviour had not bidden them to pray with Him. They should watch and pray. They should even watch with Him. But to pray for Him, or even to pray with Him, they were not bidden. And this is always so. Never do we read that Jesus and any mortal joined together in any prayer to God. On the contrary, when two or three of them asked anything in His name, He took for Himself the position of the Giver of their petition. And we know certainly

that He did not invite them to join His prayers, for it was as He was praying in a certain place that when He ceased, one of His disciples desired that they also might be taught to pray (Luke xi. 1). Clearly then they were not wont to approach the mercy seat hand in hand with Jesus. And the reason is plain. He came directly to His Father; no man else came unto the Father but by Him; there was an essential difference between His attitude towards God and ours.

Has the Socinian ever asked himself why, in this hour of His utmost weakness, Jesus sought no help from the intercession of even the chiefs of the apostles?

It is in strict harmony with this position, that St. Matthew tells us, He now said not Our Father, but My Father. No disciple is taught, in any circumstances to claim for himself a monopolized or special sonship. He may be in his closet and the door shut, yet must he remember his brethren and say, Our Father. That is a phrase which Jesus never addressed to God. None is partaker of His Sonship; none joined with Him in supplication to His Father.

THE AGONY.

"And He saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch. And He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from Him. And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; remove this cup from Me: howbeit not what I will, but what Thou wilt. And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And again He went away, and prayed, saying the same words. And again He came, and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they wist not what to answer Him. And He cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough; the hour is

come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going: behold, he that betrayeth Me is at hand."—MARK xiv. 34–42 (R.V.).

SCEPTICS and believers have both remarked that St. John, the only Evangelist who was said to have been present, gives no account of the Agony.

It is urged by the former, that the serene composure of the discourse in his Gospel leaves no room for subsequent mental conflict and recoil from suffering, which are inconsistent besides with his conception of a Divine man, too exalted to be the subject of such emotions.

But do not the others know of composure which bore to speak of His Body as broken bread, and seeing in the cup the likeness of His Blood shed, gave it to be the food of His Church for ever?

Was the resignation less serene which spoke of the smiting of the Shepherd, and yet of His leading back the flock to Galilee? If the narrative was rejected as inconsistent with the calmness of Jesus in the fourth Gospel, it should equally have repelled the authors of the other three.

We may grant that emotion, agitation, is inconsistent with unbelieving conceptions of the Christ of the fourth Gospel. But this only proves how false those conceptions are. For the emotion, the agitation, is already there At the grave of Lazarus the word which tells that when He groaned in spirit He was troubled, describes one's distress in the presence of some palpable opposing force (John xi. 34). There was, however, a much closer approach to His emotion in the garden, when the Greek world first approached Him. Then He contrasted its pursuit of self-culture with His own doctrine of self-sacrifice, declaring that even a grain of wheat must either die or abide by itself alone. To Jesus that

doctrine was no smooth, easily announced theory, and so He adds, "Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father save Me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour" (John xii. 27).

Such is the Jesus of the fourth Gospel, by no means that of its modern analysts. Nor is enough said, when we remind them that the Speaker of these words was capable of suffering; we must add that profound agitation at the last was inevitable, for One so resolute in coming to this hour, yet so keenly sensitive of its dread.

The truth is that the silence of St. John is quite in his manner. It is so that he passes by the Sacraments, as being familiar to his readers, already instructed in the gospel story. But he gives previous discourses in which the same doctrine is expressed which was embodied in each Sacrament,—the declaration that Nicodemus must be born of water, and that the Jews must eat His flesh and drink His blood. It is thus that instead of the agony, he records that earlier agitation. And this threefold recurrence of the same expedient is almost incredible except by design. St. John was therefore not forgetful of Gethsemane.

A coarser infidelity has much to say about the shrinking of our Lord from death. Such weakness is pronounced unworthy, and the bearing of multitudes of brave men and even of Christian martyrs, unmoved in the flames, is contrasted with the strong crying and tears of Jesus.

It would suffice to answer that Jesus also failed not when the trial came, but before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, and won upon the cross the adoration of a fellow-sufferer and the confession of a Roman soldier. It is more than enough to answer that His story, so far from relaxing the nerve of human

fortitude, has made those who love Him stronger to endure tortures than were emperors and inquisitors to invent them. What men call His weakness has inspired ages with fortitude. Moreover, the censure which such critics, much at ease, pronounce on Jesus expecting crucifixion, arises entirely from the magnificent and unique standard by which they try Him; for who is so hard-hearted as to think less of the valour of the martyrs because it was bought by many a lonely and intense conflict with the flesh?

For us, we accept the standard; we deny that Jesus in the garden came short of absolute perfection; but we call attention to the fact that much is conceded to us, when a criticism is ruthlessly applied to our Lord which would excite indignation and contempt if brought to bear on the silent sufferings of any hero or martyr but Himself.

Perfection is exactly what complicates the problem here.

Conscious of our own weakness, we not only justify but enjoin upon ourselves every means of attaining as much nobility as we may. We "steel ourselves to bear," and therefore we are led to expect the same of Jesus. We aim at some measure of what, in its lowest stage, is callous insensibility. Now that word is negative; it asserts the absence or paralysis of a faculty, not its fulness and activity. Thus we attain victory by a double process; in part by resolutely turning our mind away, and only in part by its ascendancy over appreciated distress. We administer anodynes to the soul. But Jesus, when he had tasted thereof, would not drink. The horrors which were closing around Him were perfectly apprehended, that they might perfectly be overcome.

Thus suffering, He became an example for gentle womanhood, and tender childhood, as well as man boastful of his stoicism. Moreover, He introduced into the world a new type of virtue, much softer and more emotional than that of the sages. The stoic, to whom pain is no evil, and the Indian laughing and singing at the stake, are partly actors and partly perversions of humanity. But the good Shepherd is also, for His gentleness, a lamb. And it is His influence which has opened our eyes to see a charm unknown before, in the sensibility of our sister and wife and child. Therefore, since the perfection of manhood means neither the ignoring of pain nor the denying of it, but the union of absolute recognition with absolute mastery of its fearfulness, Jesus, on the approach of agony and shame, and who shall say what besides, yields Himself beforehand to the full contemplation of His lot. He does so, while neither excited by the trial, nor driven to bay by the scoffs of His murderers, but in solitude, in the dark, with stealthy footsteps approaching through the gloom.

And ever since, all who went farthest down into the dread Valley, and on whom the shadow of death lay heaviest, found there the footsteps of its conqueror. It must be added that we cannot measure the keenness of the sensibility thus exposed to torture. A physical organization and a spiritual nature fresh from the creative hand, undegraded by the transmitted heritage of ages of artificial, diseased and sinful habit, unblunted by one deviation from natural ways, undrugged by one excess, was surely capable of a range of feeling as vast in anguish as in delight.

The sceptic supposes that a torrent of emotion swept our Saviour off His feet. The only narratives he can

go upon give quite the opposite impression. He is seen to fathom all that depth of misery, He allows the voice of nature to utter all the bitter earnestness of its reluctance, yet He never loses self-control, nor wavers in loyalty to His Father, nor renounces His submission to the Father's will. Nothing in the scene is more astonishing than its combination of emotion with self-government. Time after time He pauses, gently and lovingly admonishes others, and calmly returns to His intense and anxious vigil.

Thus He has won the only perfect victory. With a nature so responsive to emotion, He has not refused to feel, nor abstracted His soul from suffering, nor silenced the flesh by such an effort as when we shut our ears against a discord. Jesus sees all, confesses that He would fain escape, but resigns Himself to God.

In the face of all asceticisms, as of all stoicisms, Gethsemane is the eternal protest that every part of human nature is entitled to be heard, provided that the spirit retains the arbitration over all.

Hitherto nothing has been assumed which a reasonable sceptic can deny. Nor should such a reader fail to observe the astonishing revelation of character in the narrative, its gentle pathos, its intensity beyond what commonly belongs to gentleness, its affection, its mastery over the disciples, its filial submission. Even the rich imaginative way of thinking, which invented the parables and sacraments, is in the word "this cup."

But if the story of Gethsemane can be vindicated from such a point of view, what shall be said when it is viewed as the Church regards it? Both Testaments declare that the sufferings of the Messiah were supernatural. In the Old Testament it was pleasing to the Father to bruise Him. The terrible cry of Jesus to a

God who had forsaken Him is conclusive evidence from the New Testament. And if we ask what such a cry may mean, we find that He is a curse for us, and made to be sin for us, Who knew no sin.

If the older theology drew incredible conclusions from such words, that is no reason why we should ignore them. It is incredible that God was angry with His Son, or that in any sense the Omniscient One confused the Saviour with the sinful world. It is incredible that Jesus ever endured estrangement as of lost souls from the One Whom in Gethsemane He called Abba Father, and in the hour of utter darkness, My God, and into whose Fatherly hands He committed His Spirit. Yet it is clear that He is being treated otherwise than a sinless Being, as such, ought to expect. His natural standing-place is exchanged for ours. And as our exceeding misery, and the bitter curse of all our sin fell on Him, Who bore it away by bearing it, our pollution surely affected His purity as keenly as our stripes tried His sensibility. He shuddered as well as agonized. The deep waters in which He sank were defiled as well as cold. Only this can explain the agony and bloody sweat. And as we, for whom He endured it, think of this, we can only be silent and adore.

Once more, Jesus returns to His disciples, but no longer to look for sympathy, or to bid them watch and pray. The time for such warnings is now past: the crisis, "the hour" is come, and His speech is sad and solemn. "Sleep on now and take your rest, it is enough." Had the sentence stopped there, none would ever have proposed to treat it as a question, "Do ye now sleep on and take your rest?" It would plainly have mean, "Since ye refuse My counsel and will

none of my reproof, I strive no further to arouse the torpid will, the inert conscience, the inadequate affection. Your resistance prevails against My warning."

But critics fail to reconcile this with what follows, "Arise, let us be going." They fail through supposing that words of intense emotion must be interpreted like a syllogism or a lawyer's parchment.

"For My part, sleep on; but your sleep is now to be rudely broken: take your rest so far as respect for your Master should have kept you watchful; but the traitor is at hand to break such repose, let him not find you ignobly slumbering. 'Arise, he is at hand that doth betray Me.'"

This is not sarcasm, which taunts and wounds. But there is a lofty and profound irony in the contrast between their attitude and their circumstances, their sleep and the eagerness of the traitor.

And so they lost the most noble opportunity ever given to mortals, not through blank indifference nor unbelief, but by allowing the flesh to overcome the spirit. And thus do multitudes lose heaven, sleeping until the golden hours are gone, and He who said, "Sleep on now," says, "He that is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still."

Remembering that defilement was far more urgent than pain in our Saviour's agony, how sad is the meaning of the words, "the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners," and even of "the sinners," the representatives of all the evil from which He had kept Himself unspotted.

The one perfect flower of humanity is thrown by treachery into the polluted and polluting grasp of wickedness in its many forms; the traitor delivers Him to hirelings; the hirelings to hypocrites; the hypo-

crites to an unjust and sceptical pagan judge; the judge to his brutal soldiery; who expose Him to all that malice can wreak upon the most sensitive organization, or ingratitude upon the most tender heart.

At every stage an outrage. Every outrage an appeal to the indignation of Him who held them in the hollow of His hand. Surely it may well be said, Consider Him who endured such contradiction; and endured it from sinners against Himself.

THE ARREST.

"And straightway, while He yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now he that betrayed Him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely. And when he was come, straightway he came to Him, and saith, Rabbi; and kissed Him. And they laid hands on Him, and took Him. But a certain one of them that stood by drew his sword, and smote the servant of the high priest, and struck off his ear. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a robber, with swords and staves to seize Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took Me not: but *this is done* that the scriptures might be fulfilled. And they all left Him and fled. And a certain young man followed with Him, having a linen cloth cast about him, over *his* naked *body*: and they lay hold on him; but he left the linen cloth, and fled naked."—MARK xiv. 43–52 (R.V.).

ST. MARK has told this tragical story in the most pointed and the fewest words. The healing of the ear of Malchus concerns him not, that is but one miracle among many; and Judas passes from sight unfollowed: the thought insisted on is of foul treason, pitiable weakness, brute force predominant, majestic remonstrance and panic flight. From the central events no accessories can distract him.

There cometh, he tells us, "Judas, one of the Twelve." Who Judas was, we knew already, but we are to con-

sider how Jesus felt it now. Before His eyes is the catastrophe which His death is confronted to avert—the death of a soul, a chosen and richly dowered soul for ever lost—in spite of so many warnings—in spite of that incessant denunciation of covetousness which rings through so much of His teaching, which only the presence of Judas quite explains, and which His terrible and searching gaze must have made like fire, to sear since it could not melt—in spite of the outspoken utterances of these last days, and doubtless in spite of many prayers, he is lost: one of the Twelve.

And the dark thought would fall cold upon Christ's heart, of the multitudes more who should receive the grace of God, His own dying love, in vain. And with that, the recollection of many an hour of loving-kindness wasted on this familiar friend in whom He trusted, and who now gave Him over, as he had been expressly warned, to so cruel a fate. Even toward Judas, no unworthy bitterness could pollute that sacred heart, the fountain of unfathomable compassions, but what speechless grief must have been there, what inconceivable horror. For the outrage was dark in form as in essence. Judas apparently conceived that the Eleven might, as they had promised, rally around their Lord; and he could have no perception how impossible it was that Messiah should stoop to escape under cover of their devotion, how frankly the good Shepherd would give His life for the sheep. In the night, he thought, evasion might yet be attempted, and the town be raised. But he knew how to make the matter sure. No other would as surely as himself recognise Jesus in the uncertain light. If he were to lay hold on Him rudely, the Eleven would close in, and in the struggle, the prize might yet be lost. But approaching a little in

advance, and peaceably, he would ostentatiously kiss his Master, and so clearly point Him out that the arrest would be accomplished before the disciples realized what was being done.

But at every step the intrigue is overmastered by the clear insight of Jesus. As He foretold the time of His arrest, while yet the rulers said, Not on the feast day, so He announced the approach of the traitor, who was then contriving the last momentary deception of his polluting kiss.

We have already seen how impossible it is to think of Judas otherwise than as the Church has always regarded him, an apostate and a traitor in the darkest sense. The milder theory is at this stage shattered by one small yet significant detail. At the supper, when conscious of being suspected, and forced to speak, he said not, like the others, "Lord," but "Rabbi, is it I?" Now they meet again, and the same word is on his lips, whether by design and in Satanic insolence, or in hysterical agitation and uncertainty, who can say?

But no loyalty, however misled, inspired that halting and inadequate epithet, no wild hope of a sudden blazing out of glories too long concealed is breathed in the traitor's Rabbi!

With that word, and his envenomed kiss, the "much kissing," which took care that Jesus should not shake him off, he passes from this great Gospel. Not a word is here of his remorse, or of the dreadful path down which he stumbled to his own place. Even the lofty remonstrance of the Lord is not recorded: it suffices to have told how he betrayed the Son of man with a kiss, and so infused a peculiar and subtle poison into Christ's draught of deadly wine. That, and not the punishment of that, is what St. Mark recorded for the

Church, the awful fall of an apostle, chosen of Christ; the solemn warning to all privileged persons, richly endowed and highly placed; the door to hell, as Bunyan has it, from the very gate of Heaven.

A great multitude with swords and staves had come from the rulers. Possibly some attempt at rescue was apprehended from the Galileans who had so lately triumphed around Jesus. More probably the demonstration was planned to suggest to Pilate that a dangerous political agitation had to be confronted.

At all events, the multitude did not terrify the disciples: cries arose from their little band, "Lord shall we smite with the sword?" and if Jesus had consented, it seems that with two swords the Eleven whom declaimers make to be so craven, would have assailed the multitude in arms.

Now this is what points the moral of their failure. Few of us would confess personal cowardice by accepting a warning from the fears of the fearful. But the fears of the brave must needs alarm us. It is one thing to defy death, sword in hand, in some wild hour of chivalrous effort—although the honours we shower upon the valiant prove that even such fortitude is less common than we would fain believe. But there is a deep which opens beyond this. It is a harder thing to endure the silent passive anguish to which the Lamb, dumb before the shearers, calls His followers. The victories of the spirit are beyond animal strength of nerve. In their highest forms they are beyond the noble reach of intellectual resolution. How far beyond it we may learn by contrasting the excitement and then the panic of the Eleven with the sublime composure of their Lord.

One of them, whom we know to have been the

impulsive Simon, showed his loss of self-control by what would have been a breach of discipline, even had resistance been intended. While others asked should they smite with the sword, he took the decision upon himself, and struck a feeble and abortive blow, enough to exasperate but not to disable. In so doing he added, to the sorrows of Jesus, disobedience, and the inflaming of angry passion among His captors.

Strange it is, and instructive, that the first act of violence in the annals of Christianity came not from her assailants but from her son. And strange to think with what emotions Jesus must have beheld that blow.

St. Mark records neither the healing of Malchus nor the rebuke of Peter. Throughout the events which now crowd fast upon us, we shall not find him careful about fulness of detail. This is never his manner, though he loves any detail which is graphic, characteristic, or intensifying. But his concern is with the spirit of the Lord and of His enemies: he is blind to no form of injustice or insult which heightened the sufferings of Jesus, to no manifestation of dignity and self-control overmastering the rage of hell. If He is unjustly tried by Caiaphas, it matters nothing that Annas also wronged Him. If the soldiers of Pilate insulted Him, it matters nothing that the soldiers of Herod also set Him at nought. Yet the flight of a nameless youth is recorded, since it adds a touch to the picture of His abandonment.

And therefore he records the indignant remonstrance of Jesus upon the manner of His arrest. He was no man of violence and blood, to be arrested with a display of overwhelming force. He needed not to be sought in concealment and at midnight.

He had spoken daily in the temple, but then their

malice was defeated, their snares rent asunder, and the people witnessed their exposure. But all this was part of His predicted suffering, for Whom not only pain but injustice was foretold, Who should be taken from prison and from judgment.

It was a lofty remonstrance. It showed how little could danger and betrayal disturb His consciousness, and how clearly He discerned the calculation of His foes.

At this moment of unmistakable surrender, His disciples forsook Him and fled. One young man did indeed follow Him, springing hastily from slumber in some adjacent cottage, and wrapped only in a linen cloth. But he too, when seized, fled away, leaving his only covering in the hands of the soldiers.

This youth may perhaps have been the Evangelist himself, of whom we know that, a few years later, he joined Paul and Barnabas at the outset, but forsook them when their journey became perilous.

It is at least as probable that the incident is recorded as a picturesque climax to that utter panic which left Jesus to tread the winepress alone, deserted by all, though He never forsook any.

BEFORE CAIAPHAS.

"And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and there come together with him all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter had followed Him afar off, even within, into the court of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers, and warming himself in the light *of the fire*. Now the chief priests and the whole council sought witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found it not. For many bare false witness against Him, and their witness agreed not together. And there stood up certain, and bare false witness against Him, saying, We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without

hands. And not even so did their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? what is it which these witness against Thee? But He held His peace and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, and saith unto Him, Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven. And the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What further need have we of witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned Him to be worthy of death. And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophesy: and the officers received Him with blows of their hands"—MARK xiv. 53–65 (R.V.).

WE have now to see the Judge of quick and dead taken from prison and judgment, the Preacher of liberty to the captives bound, and the Prince of Life killed. It is the most solemn page in earthly story; and as we read St. Mark's account, it will concern us less to reconcile his statements with those of the other three, than to see what is taught us by his especial manner of regarding it. Reconciliation, indeed, is quite unnecessary, if we bear in mind that to omit a fact is not to contradict it. For St. Mark is not writing a history but a Gospel, and his readers are Gentiles, for whom the details of Hebrew intrigue matter nothing, and the trial before a Galilean Tetrarch would be only half intelligible.

St. John, who had been an eye-witness, knew that the private inquiry before Annas was vital, for there the decision was taken which subsequent and more formal assemblies did but ratify. He therefore, writing last, threw this ray of explanatory light over all that the others had related. St. Luke recorded in the Acts (iv. 27) that the apostles recognised, in the consent of Romans and Jews, and of Herod and Pilate, what the Psalmist had long foretold, the rage of the heathen

and the vain imagination of the peoples, and the conjunction of kings and rulers. His Gospel therefore lays stress upon the part played by all of these. And St. Matthew's readers could appreciate every fulfilment of prophecy, and every touch of local colour. St. Mark offers to us the essential points: rejection and cruelty by His countrymen, rejection and cruelty over again by Rome, and the dignity, the elevation, the lofty silence and the dauntless testimony of his Lord. As we read, we are conscious of the weakness of His crafty foes, who are helpless and baffled, and have no resort except to abandon their charges and appeal to His own truthfulness to destroy Him.

He shows us first the informal assembly before Caiaphas, whither Annas sent Him with that sufficient sign of his own judgment, the binding of His hands, and the first buffet, inflicted by an officer, upon His holy face. It was not yet daylight, and a formal assembly of the Sanhedrim was impossible. But what passed now was so complete a rehearsal of the tragedy, that the regular meeting could be disposed of in a single verse.

There was confusion and distress among the conspirators. It was not their intention to have arrested Jesus on the feast day, at the risk of an uproar among the people. But He had driven them to do so by the expulsion of their spy, who, if they delayed longer, would be unable to guide their officers. And so they found themselves without evidence, and had to play the part of prosecutors when they ought to be impartial judges. There is something frightful in the spectacle of these chiefs of the religion of Jehovah suborning perjury as the way to murder; and it reminds us of the solemn truth, that no wickedness is

so perfect and heartless as that upon which sacred influences have long been vainly operating, no corruption so hateful as that of a dead religion. Presently they would cause the name of God to be blasphemed among the heathen, by bribing the Roman guards to lie about the corpse. And the heart of Jesus was tried by the disgraceful spectacle of many false witnesses, found in turn and paraded against Him, but unable to agree upon any consistent charge, while yet the shameless proceedings were not discontinued. At the last stood up witnesses to pervert what He had spoken at the first cleansing of the temple, which the second cleansing had so lately recalled to mind. They represented Him as saying, "I am able to destroy this temple made with hands,"—or perhaps, "I will destroy" it, for their testimony varied on this grave point—"and in three days I will build another made without hands." It was for blaspheming the Holy Place that Stephen died, and the charge was a grave one; but His words were impudently manipulated to justify it. There had been no proposal to substitute a different temple, and no mention of the temple made with hands. Nor had Jesus ever proposed to destroy anything. He had spoken of their destroying the Temple of His Body, and in the use they made of the prediction they fulfilled it.

As we read of these repeated failures before a tribunal so unjust, we are led to suppose that opposition must have sprung up to disconcert them; we remember the councillor of honourable estate, who had not consented to their counsel and deed, and we think, What if, even in that hour of evil, one voice was uplifted for righteousness? What if Joseph confessed Him in the conclave, like the penitent thief upon the cross?

And now the high priest, enraged and alarmed by imminent failure, rises in the midst, and in the face of all law cross-questions the prisoner, Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee? But Jesus will not become their accomplice; He maintains the silence which contrasts so nobly with their excitement, which at once sees through their schemes and leaves them to fall asunder. And the urgency of the occasion, since hesitation now will give the city time to rise, drives them to a desperate expedient. Without discussion of His claims, without considering that some day there *must* be some Messiah, (else what is their faith and who are they?) they will treat it as blasphemous and a capital offence simply to claim that title. Caiaphas adjures Him by their common God to answer, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? So then they were not utterly ignorant of the higher nature of the Son of David: they remembered the words, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. But the only use they ever made of their knowledge was to heighten to the uttermost the Messianic dignity which they would make it death to claim. And the prisoner knew well the consequences of replying. But He had come into the world to bear witness to the truth, and this was the central truth of all. "And Jesus said, I am." Now Renan tells us that He was the greatest religious genius who ever lived, or probably ever shall live. Mill tells us that religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this Man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity. And Strauss thinks that we know enough of Him to assert that His consciousness was unclouded by the memory of any sin. Well then, if anything in the life of Jesus is beyond

controversy, it is this, that the sinless Man, our ideal representative and guide, the greatest religious genius of the race, died for asserting upon oath that He was the Son of God. A good deal has been said lately, both wise and foolish, about Comparative Religion: is there anything to compare with this? Lunatics, with this example before their eyes, have conceived wild and dreadful infatuations. But these are the words of Him whose character has dominated nineteen centuries, and changed the history of the world. And they stand alone in the records of mankind.

As Jesus spoke the fatal words, as malice and hatred lighted the faces of His wicked judges with a base and ignoble joy, what was His own thought? We know it by the warning that He added. They supposed themselves judges and irresponsible, but there should yet be another tribunal, with justice of a far different kind, and there they should occupy another place. For all that was passing before His eyes, so false, hypocritical and murderous, there was no lasting victory, no impunity, no escape: "Ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven." Therefore His apostle Peter tells us that in this hour, when He was reviled and reviled not again, "He committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter ii. 23).

He had now quoted that great vision in which the prophet Daniel saw Him brought near unto the Ancient of Days, and invested with an everlasting dominion (Dan. vii. 13, 14.) But St. Matthew adds one memorable word. He did not warn them, and He was not Himself sustained, only by the mention of a far-off judgment: He said they should behold Him thus "henceforth." And that very day they saw the veil of

their temple rent, felt the world convulsed, and remembered in their terror that He had foretold His own death and His resurrection, against which they had still to guard. And in the open sepulchre, and the supernatural vision told them by its keepers, in great and notable miracles wrought by the name of Jesus, in the desertion of a great multitude even of priests, and their own fear to be found fighting against God, in all this the rise of that new power was thenceforth plainly visible, which was presently to bury them and their children under the ruins of their temple and their palaces. But for the moment the high-priest was only relieved; and he proceeded, rending his clothes, to announce his judgment, before consulting the court, who had no further need of witnesses, and were quite content to become formally the accusers before themselves. The sentence of this irregular and informal court was now pronounced, to fit them for bearing part, at sunrise, in what should be an unbiassed trial; and while they awaited the dawn Jesus was abandoned to the brutality of their servants, one of whom He had healed that very night. They spat on the Lord of Glory. They covered His face, an act which was the symbol of a death sentence (Esther vii. 8), and then they buffeted Him, and invited Him to prophesy who smote Him. And the officers "received Him" with blows.

What was the meaning of this outburst of savage cruelty of men whom Jesus had never wronged, and some of whose friends must have shared His superhuman gifts of love? Partly it was the instinct of low natures to trample on the fallen, and partly the result of partizanship. For these servants of the priests must have seen many evidences of the hate and dread with which their masters regarded Jesus. But there was

doubtless another motive. Not without fear, we may be certain, had they gone forth to arrest at midnight the Personage of whom so many miraculous tales were universally believed. They must have remembered the captains of fifty whom Elijah consumed with fire. And in fact there was a moment when they all fell prostrate before His majestic presence. But now their terror was at an end: He was helpless in their hands; and they revenged their fears upon the Author of them.

Thus Jesus suffered shame to make us partakers of His glory; and the veil of death covered His head, that He might destroy the face of the covering cast over all peoples, and the veil that was spread over all nations. And even in this moment of bitterest outrage He remembered and rescued a soul in the extreme of jeopardy, for it was now that the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.

THE FALL OF PETER.

"And as Peter was beneath in the court, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest; and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and saith, Thou also wast with the Nazarene, *even* Jesus. But he denied, saying, I neither know, nor understand what thou sayest: and he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And the maid saw him, and began again to say to them that stood by, This is *one* of them. But he again denied it. And after a little while again they that stood by said to Peter, Of a truth thou art *one* of them; for thou art a Galilæan. But he began to curse, and to swear, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And straightway the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word, how that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept"—MARK xiv. 66–72 (R.V.).

THE fall of Peter has called forth the easy scorn of multitudes who never ran any risk for Christ. But if he had been a coward, and his denial a dastardly

weakness, it would not be a warning for the whole Church, but only for feeble natures. Whereas the lesson which it proclaims is this deep and solemn one, that no natural endowments can bear the strain of the spiritual life. Peter had dared to smite when only two swords were forthcoming against the band of Roman soldiers and the multitude from the chief priests. After the panic in which all forsook Jesus, and so fulfilled the prediction "ye shall leave Me alone," none ventured so far as Peter. John indeed accompanied him; but John ran little risk, he had influence and was therefore left unassailed, whereas Peter was friendless and a mark for all men, and had made himself conspicuous in the garden. Of those who declaim about his want of courage few indeed would have dared so much. And whoever misunderstands him, Jesus did not. He said to him, "Satan hath desired to have you (all) that he may sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for thee (especially) that thy strength fail not." Around him the fiercest of the struggle was to rage, as around some point of vantage on a battlefield; and it was he, when once he had turned again, who should stablish his brethren (Luke xxii. 31, 32).

God forbid that we should speak one light or scornful word of this great apostle! God grant us, if our footsteps slip, the heart to weep such tears as his.

Peter was a loving, brave and loyal man. But the circumstances were not such as human bravery could deal with. Resistance, which would have kindled his spirit, had been forbidden to him, and was now impossible. The public was shut out, and he was practically alone among his enemies. He had come "to see the end," and it was a miserable sight that he beheld. Jesus was passive, silent, insulted: His foes fierce,

unscrupulous and confident. And Peter was more and more conscious of being alone, in peril, and utterly without resource. Moreover sleeplessness and misery lead to physical languor and cold,* and as the officers had kindled a fire, he was drawn thither, like a moth, by the double wish to avoid isolation and to warm himself. In thus seeking to pass for one of the crowd, he showed himself ashamed of Jesus, and incurred the menaced penalty, "of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh." And the method of self-concealment which he adopted only showed his face, strongly illuminated, as St. Mark tells us, by the flame.

If now we ask for the secret of his failing resolution, we can trace the disease far back. It was self-confidence. He reckoned himself the one to walk upon the waters. He could not be silent on the holy mount, when Jesus held high communion with the inhabitants of heaven. He rebuked the Lord for dark forebodings. When Jesus would wash his feet, although expressly told that he should understand the act hereafter, he rejoined, Thou shalt never wash my feet, and was only sobered by the peremptory announcement that further rebellion would involve rejection. He was sure that if all the rest were to deny Jesus, he never should deny Him. In the garden he slept, because he failed to pray and watch. And then he did not wait to be directed, but strove to fight the battle of Jesus with the weapons of the flesh. Therefore he forsook Him and fled. And the consequences of that hasty blow were heavy upon him now. It marked him for the attention of the servants: it drove him to merge himself in the crowd. But his bearing was too suspicious to

* "By the fire the children sit
Cold in that atmosphere of death."—*In Memoriam*, xx.

enable him to escape unquestioned. The first assault came very naturally, from the maid who kept the door, and had therefore seen him with John. He denied indeed, but with hesitation, not so much affirming that the charge was false as that he could not understand it And thereupon he changed his place, either to escape notice or through mental disquietude; but as he went into the porch the cock crew. The girl however was not to be shaken off: she pointed him out to others, and since he had forsaken the only solid ground, he now denied the charge angrily and roundly. An hour passed, such an hour of shame, perplexity and guilt, as he had never known, and then there came a still more dangerous attack. They had detected his Galilean accent, while he strove to pass for one of them. And a kinsman of Malchus used words as threatening as were possible without enabling a miracle to be proved, since the wound had vanished: "Did I myself not see thee in the garden with Him?" Whereupon, to prove that his speech had nothing to do with Jesus, he began to curse and swear, saying, I know not the man. And the cock crew a second time, and Peter remembered the warning of his Lord, which then sounded so harsh, but now proved to be the means of his salvation. And the eyes of his Master, full of sorrow and resolution, fell on him. And he knew that he had added a bitter pang to the sufferings of the Blessed One. And the crowd and his own danger were forgotten, and he went out and wept.

It was for Judas to strive desperately to put himself right with man: the sorrow of Peter was for himself and God to know.

What lessons are we taught by this most natural and humbling story? That he who thinketh he standeth

must take heed lest he fall. That we are in most danger when self-confident, and only strong when we are weak. That the beginning of sin is like the letting out of water. That Jesus does not give us up when we cast ourselves away, but as long as a pulse of love survives, or a spark of loyalty, He will appeal to that by many a subtle suggestion of memory and of providence, to recall His wanderer to Himself.

And surely we learn by the fall of this great and good apostle to restore the fallen in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves lest we also be tempted, remembering also that to Peter, Jesus sent the first tidings of His resurrection, and that the message found him in company with John, and therefore in the house with Mary. What might have been the issue of his anguish if these holy ones had cast Him off?

CHAPTER XV.

PILATE.

"And straightway in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, held a consultation, and bound Jesus, and carried Him away, and delivered Him up to Pilate."

". . . And they lead Him out to crucify Him."—MARK xv. 1–20 (R.V.).

WITH morning came the formal assembly, which St. Mark dismisses in a single verse. It was indeed a disgraceful mockery. Before the trial began its members had prejudged the case, passed sentence by anticipation, and abandoned Jesus, as one condemned, to the brutality of their servants. And now the spectacle of a prisoner outraged and maltreated moves no indignation in their hearts.

Let us, for whom His sufferings were endured, reflect upon the strain and anguish of all these repeated examinations, these foregone conclusions gravely adopted in the name of justice, these exhibitions of greed for blood. Among the "unknown sufferings" by which the Eastern Church invokes her Lord, surely not the least was His outraged moral sense.

As the issue of it all, they led Him away to Pilate, meaning, by the weight of such an accusing array, to overpower any possible scruples of the governor, but in fact fulfilling His words, "they shall deliver Him unto the Gentiles." And the first question recorded by St. Mark expresses the intense surprise of Pilate. "Thou,"

so meek, so unlike the numberless conspirators that I have tried,—or perhaps, "Thou," Whom no sympathising multitude sustains, and for Whose death the disloyal priesthood thirsts, "Art *Thou* the King of the Jews?" We know how carefully Jesus disentangled His claim from the political associations which the high priests intended that it should suggest, how the King of Truth would not exaggerate any more than understate the case, and explained that His kingdom was not of this world, that His servants did not fight, that His royal function was to uphold the truth, not to expel conquerors. The eyes of a practised Roman governor saw through the accusation very clearly. Before him, Jesus was accused of sedition, but that was a transparent pretext; Jews did not hate Him for enmity to Rome: He was a rival teacher and a successful one, and for envy they had delivered Him. So far all was well. Pilate investigated the charge, arrived at the correct judgment, and it only remained that he should release the innocent man. In reaching this conclusion Jesus had given him the most prudent and skilful help, but as soon as the facts became clear, He resumed His impressive and mysterious silence. Thus, before each of his judges in turn, Jesus avowed Himself the Messiah and then held His peace. It was an awful silence, which would not give that which was holy to the dogs, nor profane the truth by unavailing protests or controversies. It was, however, a silence only possible to an exalted nature full of self-control, since the words actually spoken redeem it from any suspicion or stain of sullenness. It is the conscience of Pilate which must henceforth speak. The Romans were the lawgivers of the ancient world, and a few years earlier their greatest poet had boasted that their mission was to spare the helpless

and to crush the proud. In no man was an act of deliberate injustice, of complaisance to the powerful at the cost of the good, more unpardonable than in a leader of that splendid race, whose laws are still the favourite study of those who frame and administer our own. And the conscience of Pilate struggled hard, aided by superstitious fear. The very silence of Jesus amid many charges, by none of which His accusers would stand or fall, excited the wonder of His judge. His wife's dream aided the effect. And he was still more afraid when he heard that this strange and elevated Personage, so unlike any other prisoner whom he had ever tried, laid claim to be Divine. Thus even in his desire to save Jesus, his motive was not pure, it was rather an instinct of self-preservation than a sense of justice. But there was danger on the other side as well; since he had already incurred the imperial censure, he could not without grave apprehensions contemplate a fresh complaint, and would certainly be ruined if he were accused of releasing a conspirator against Cæsar. And accordingly he stooped to mean and crooked ways, he lost hold of the only clue in the perplexing labyrinth of expediencies, which is principle, and his name in the creed of Christendom is spoken with a shudder—"crucified under Pontius Pilate!"

It was the time for him to release a prisoner to them, according to an obscure custom, which some suppose to have sprung from the release of one of the two sacrificial goats, and others from the fact that they now celebrated their own deliverance from Egypt. At this moment the people began to demand their usual indulgence, and an evil hope arose in the heart of Pilate. They would surely welcome One who was in danger as a patriot: he would himself make the offer,

and he would put it in this tempting form, "Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" Thus would the enmity of the priests be gratified, since Jesus would henceforth be a condemned culprit, and owe His life to their intercession with the foreigner. But the proposal was a surrender. The life of Jesus had not been forfeited; and when it was placed at their discretion, it was already lawlessly taken away. Moreover, when the offer was rejected, Jesus was in the place of a culprit who should not be released. To the priests, nevertheless, it was a dangerous proposal, and they needed to stir up the people, or perhaps Barabbas would not have been preferred.

Instigated by their natural guides, their religious teachers, the Jews made the tremendous choice, which has ever since been heavy on their heads and on their children's. Yet if ever an error could be excused by the plea of authority, and the duty of submission to constituted leaders, it was this error. They followed men who sat in Moses' seat, and who were thus entitled, according to Jesus Himself, to be obeyed. Yet that authority has not relieved the Hebrew nation from the wrath which came upon them to the uttermost. The salvation they desired was not moral elevation or spiritual life, and so Jesus had nothing to bestow upon them; they refused the Holy One and the Just. What they wanted was the world, the place which Rome held, and which they fondly hoped was yet to be their own. Even to have failed in the pursuit of this was better than to have the words of everlasting life, and so the name of Barabbas was enough to secure the rejection of Christ. It would almost seem that Pilate was ready to release both, if that would satisfy them, for he asks, in hesitation and perplexity, "What shall I do then

with Him Whom ye call the King of the Jews?" Surely in their excitement for an insurgent, that title, given by themselves, will awake their pity. But again and again, like the howl of wolves, resounds their ferocious cry, Crucify Him, crucify Him.

The irony of Providence is known to every student of history, but it never was so manifest as here. Under the pressure of circumstances upon men whom principle has not made firm, we find a Roman governor striving to kindle every disloyal passion of his subjects, on behalf of the King of the Jews,—appealing to men whom he hated and despised, and whose charges have proved empty as chaff, to say, What evil has He done? and even to tell him, on his judgment throne, what he shall do with their King; we find the men who accused Jesus of stirring up the people to sedition, now shamelessly agitating for the release of a red-handed insurgent; forced moreover to accept the responsibility which they would fain have devolved on Pilate, and themselves to pronounce the hateful sentence of crucifixion, unknown to their law, but for which they had secretly intrigued; and we find the multitude fiercely clamouring for a defeated champion of brute force, whose weapon has snapped in his hands, who has led his followers to the cross, and from whom there is no more to hope. What satire upon their hope of a temporal Messiah could be more bitter than their own cry, "We have no king but Cæsar"? And what satire upon this profession more destructive than their choice of Barabbas and refusal of Christ? And all the while, Jesus looks on in silence, carrying out His mournful but effectual plan, the true Master of the movements which design to crush Him, and which He has foretold. As He ever receives gifts for the rebellious, and is the Saviour of

all men, though especially of them that believe, so now His passion, which retrieved the erring soul of Peter, and won the penitent thief, rescues Barabbas from the cross. His suffering was made visibly vicarious.

One is tempted to pity the feeble judge, the only person who is known to have attempted to rescue Jesus, beset by his old faults, which will make an impeachment fatal, wishing better than he dares to act, hesitating, sinking inch by inch, and like a bird with broken wing. No accomplice in this frightful crime is so suggestive of warning to hearts not entirely hardened.

But pity is lost in sterner emotion as we remember that this wicked governor, having borne witness to the perfect innocence of Jesus, was content, in order to save himself from danger, to watch the Blessed One enduring all the horrors of a Roman scourging, and then to yield Him up to die.

It is now the unmitigated cruelty of ancient paganism which has closed its hand upon our Lord. When the soldiers led Him away within the court, He was lost to His nation, which had renounced Him. It is upon this utter alienation, even more than the locality where the cross was fixed, that the Epistle to the Hebrews turns our attention, when it reminds us that "the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered without the gate." The physical exclusion, the material parallel points to something deeper, for the inference is that of estrangement. Those who serve the tabernacle cannot eat of our altar. Let us go forth unto Him, bearing His reproach. (Heb. xii. 10–13).

Renounced by Israel, and about to become a curse under the law, He has now to suffer the cruelty of wantonness, as He has already endured the cruelty of hatred and fear. Now, more than ever perhaps, He looks for pity and there is no man. None responded to the deep appeal of the eyes which had never seen misery without relieving it. The contempt of the strong for the weak and suffering, of coarse natures for sensitive ones, of Romans for Jews, all these were blended with bitter scorn of the Jewish expectation that some day Rome shall bow before a Hebrew conqueror, in the mockery which Jesus now underwent, when they clad Him in such cast-off purple as the Palace yielded, thrust a reed into His pinioned hand, crowned Him with thorns, beat these into His holy head with the sceptre they had offered Him, and then proceeded to render the homage of their nation to the Messiah of Jewish hopes. It may have been this mockery which suggested to Pilate the inscription for the cross. But where is the mockery now? In crowning Him King of sufferings, and Royal among those who weep, they secured to Him the adherence of all hearts. Christ was made perfect by the things which He suffered; and it was not only in spite of insult and anguish but by means of them that He drew all men unto Him.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

"And they compel one passing by, Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to go *with them*, that he might bear His cross. And they bring Him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they offered Him wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not. And they crucify Him, and part His garments among them, casting lots upon them, what each should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the superscription of His accusation was written

over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with Him they crucify two robbers; one on His right hand, and one on His left. And they that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ha! Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself, and come down from the cross. In like manner also the chief priests mocking *Him* among themselves with the scribes said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with Him reproached Him."—MARK xv. 21–32 (R.V.).

AT last the preparations were complete and the interval of mental agony was over. They led Him away to crucify Him. And upon the road an event of mournful interest took place. It was the custom to lay the two arms of the cross upon the doomed man, fastening them together at such an angle as to pass behind His neck, while his hands were bound to the ends in front. And thus it was that Jesus went forth bearing His cross. Did He think of this when He bade us take His yoke upon us? Did He wait for events to explain the words, by making it visibly one and the same to take His yoke and to take up our cross and follow Him?

On the road, however, they forced a reluctant stranger to go with them that he might bear the cross. The traditional reason is that our Redeemer's strength gave way, and it became physically impossible for Him to proceed; but this is challenged upon the ground that to fail would have been unworthy of our Lord, and would mar the perfection of His example. How so, when the failure was a real one? Is there no fitness in the belief that He who was tempted in all points like as we are, endured this hardness also, of struggling with the impossible demands of human cruelty, the spirit indeed willing but the flesh weak? It is not easy to believe that any other reason than manifest

inability, would have induced his persecutors to spare Him one drop of bitterness, one throb of pain. The noblest and most delicately balanced frame, like all other exquisite machines, is not capable of the rudest strain; and we know that Jesus had once sat wearied by the well, while the hardy fishers went into the town, and returned with bread. And this night our gentle Master had endured what no common victim knew. Long before the scourging, or even the buffeting began, His spiritual exhaustion had needed that an angel from heaven should strengthen Him. And the utmost possibility of exertion was now reached: the spot where they met Simon of Cyrene marks this melancholy limit; and suffering henceforth must be purely passive.

We cannot assert with confidence that Simon and his family were saved by this event. The coercion put upon him, the fact that he was seized and "impressed" into the service, already seems to indicate sympathy with Jesus. And we are fain to believe that he who received the honour, so strange and sad and sacred, the unique privilege of lifting some little of the crushing burden of the Saviour, was not utterly ignorant of what he did. We know at least that the names of his children, Alexander and Rufus, were familiar in the Church for which St. Mark was writing, and that in Rome a Rufus was chosen in the Lord, and his mother was like a mother to St. Paul (Rom. xvi. 13). With what feelings may they have recalled the story, "him they compelled to bear His cross."

They led Him to a place where the rounded summit of a knoll had its grim name from some resemblance to a human skull, and prepared the crosses there.

It was the custom of the daughters of Jerusalem, who lamented Him as He went, to provide a stupefying

draught for the sufferers of this atrocious cruelty. "And they offered Him wine mixed with myrrh, but He received it not," although that dreadful thirst, which was part of the suffering of crucifixion, had already begun, for He only refused when He had tasted it.

In so doing He rebuked all who seek to drown sorrows or benumb the soul in wine, all who degrade and dull their sensibilities by physical excess or indulgence, all who would rather blind their intelligence than pay the sharp cost of its exercise. He did not condemn the use of anodynes, but the abuse of them. It is one thing to suspend the senses during an operation, and quite another thing by one's own choice to pass into eternity without consciousness enough to commit the soul into its Father's hands.

"And they crucify Him." Let the words remain as the Evangelist left them, to tell their own story of human sin, and of Divine love which many waters could not quench, neither could the depths drown it.

Only let us think in silence of all that those words convey.

In the first sharpness of mortal anguish, Jesus saw His executioners sit down at ease, all unconscious of the dread meaning of what was passing by their side, to part His garments among them, and cast lots for the raiment which they had stripped from His sacred form. The Gospels are content thus to abandon those relics about which so many legends have been woven. But indeed all through these four wonderful narratives the self-restraint is perfect. When the Epistles touch upon the subject of the crucifixion they kindle into flame. When St. Peter soon afterwards referred to it, his indignation is beyond question, and Stephen called the rulers betrayers and murderers (Acts ii. 23, 24;

iii. 13, 14; vii. 51–53) but not one single syllable of complaint or comment mingles with the clear flow of narrative in the four Gospels. The truth is that the subject was too great, too fresh and vivid in their minds, to be adorned or enlarged upon. What comment of St. Mark, what mortal comment, could add to the weight of the words "they crucify Him"? Men use no figures of speech when telling how their own beloved one died. But it was differently that the next age wrote about the crucifixion; and perhaps the lofty self-restraint of the Evangelists has never been attained again.

St. Mark tells us that He was crucified at the third hour, whereas we read in St. John that it was "about the sixth hour" when Pilate ascended the seat of judgment (xix. 14). It seems likely that St. John used the Roman reckoning, and his computation does not pretend to be exact; while we must remember that mental agitation conspired with the darkening of the sky, to render such an estimate as he offers even more than usually vague.

It has been supposed that St. Mark's "third hour" goes back to the scourging, which, as being a regular part of Roman crucifixion, he includes, although inflicted in this case before the sentence. But it will prove quite as hard to reconcile this distribution of time with "the sixth hour" in St. John, while it is at variance with the context in which St. Mark asserts it.

The small and bitter heart of Pilate keenly resented his defeat and the victory of the priests. Perhaps it was when his soldiers offered the scornful homage of Rome to Israel and her monarch, that he saw the way to a petty revenge. And all Jerusalem was scandalized by reading the inscription over a crucified malefactor's head, The King of the Jews.

It needs some reflection to perceive how sharp the taunt was. A few years ago they had a king, but the sceptre had departed from Judah; Rome had abolished him. It was their hope that soon a native king would for ever sweep away the foreigner from their fields. But here the Roman exhibited the fate of such a claim, and professed to inflict its horrors not upon one whom they disavowed, but upon their king indeed. We know how angrily and vainly they protested; and again we seem to recognise the solemn irony of Providence. For this was their true King, and they, who resented the superscription, had fixed their Anointed there.

All the more they would disconnect themselves from Him, and wreak their passion upon the helpless One whom they hated. The populace mocked Him openly: the chief priests, too cultivated to insult avowedly a dying man, mocked Him "among themselves," speaking bitter words for Him to hear. The multitude repeated the false charge which had probably done much to inspire their sudden preference for Barabbas, "Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it again in three days, save Thyself and come down from the cross."

They little suspected that they were recalling words of consolation to His memory, reminding Him that all this suffering was foreseen, and how it was all to end. The chief priests spoke also a truth full of consolation, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save," although it was no physical bar which forbade Him to accept their challenge. And when they flung at Him His favourite demand for faith, saying "Let the Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, that we may see and believe" surely they reminded Him of the great multitude who should not see, and yet should

believe, when He came back through the gates of death.

Thus the words they spoke could not afflict Him. But what horror to the pure soul to behold these yawning abysses of malignity, these gulfs of pitiless hate. The affronts hurled at suffering and defeat by prosperous and exultant malice are especially Satanic. Many diseases inflict more physical pain than torturers ever invented, but they do not excite the same horror, because gentle ministries are there to charm away the despair which human hate and execration conjure up.

To add to the insult of His disgraceful death, the Romans had crucified two robbers, doubtless from the band of Barabbas, one upon each side of Jesus. We know how this outrage led to the salvation of one of them, and refreshed the heavy laden soul of Jesus, oppressed by so much guilt and vileness, with the visible firstfruit of His passion, giving Him to see of the travail of His soul, by which He shall yet be satisfied.

But in their first agony and despair, when all voices were unanimous against the Blessed One, and they too must needs find some outlet for their frenzy, they both reproached Him. Thus the circle of human wrong was rounded.

The traitor, the deserters, the forsworn apostle, the perjured witnesses, the hypocritical pontiff professing horror at blasphemy while himself abjuring his national hope, the accomplices in a sham trial, the murderer of the Baptist and his men of war, the abject ruler who declared Him innocent yet gave Him up to die, the servile throng who waited on the priests, the soldiers of Herod and of Pilate, the pitiless crowd which clamoured for His blood, and they who mocked Him in His agony,—not one of them whom Jesus did

not compassionate, whose cruelty had not power to wring His heart. Disciple and foeman, Roman and Jew, priest and soldier and judge, all had lifted up their voice against Him. And when the comrades of His passion joined the cry, the last ingredient of human cruelty was infused into the cup which James and John had once proposed to drink with Him.

THE DEATH OF JESUS.

"And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, He calleth Elijah. And one ran, and filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink, saying, Let be; let us see whether Elijah cometh to take Him down. And Jesus uttered a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood by over against Him, saw that He so gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. And there were also women beholding from afar: among whom *were* both Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; who, when He was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him; and many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem."—MARK xv. 33–41 (R.V.).

THREE hours of raging human passion, endured with Godlike patience, were succeeded by three hours of darkness, hushing mortal hatred into silence, and perhaps contributing to the penitence of the reviler at His side. It was a supernatural gloom, since an eclipse of the sun was impossible during the full moon of Passover. Shall we say that, as it shall be in the last days, nature sympathized with humanity, and the angel of the sun hid his face from his suffering Lord?

Or was it the shadow of a still more dreadful eclipse,

for now the eternal Father veiled His countenance from the Son in whom He was well pleased?

In some true sense God forsook Him. And we have to seek for a meaning of this awful statement—inadequate no doubt, for all our thoughts must come short of such a reality, but free from prevarication and evasion.

It is wholly unsatisfactory to regard the verse as merely the heading of a psalm, cheerful for the most part, which Jesus inaudibly recited. Why was only this verse uttered aloud? How false an impression must have been produced upon the multitude, upon St. John, upon the penitent thief, if Jesus were suffering less than the extreme of spiritual anguish. Nay, we feel that never before can the verse have attained its fullest meaning, a meaning which no experience of David could more than dimly shadow forth, since we ask in our sorrows, Why have we forsaken God? but Jesus said, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?

And this unconsciousness of any reason for desertion disproves the old notion that He felt Himself a sinner, and "suffered infinite remorse, as being the chief sinner in the universe, all the sins of mankind being His." One who felt thus could neither have addressed God as "My God," nor asked why He was forsaken.

Still less does it allow us to believe that the Father perfectly identified Jesus with sin, so as to be "wroth" with Him, and even "to hate Him to the uttermost." Such notions, the offspring of theories carried to a wild and irreverent extreme, when carefully examined impute to the Deity confusion of thought, a mistaking of the Holy One for a sinner or rather for the aggregate of sinners. But it is very different when we pass from the Divine consciousness to the bearing of God toward Christ our representative, to the outshining or eclipse

of His favour. That this was overcast is manifest from the fact that Jesus everywhere else addresses Him as My Father, here only as My God. Even in the garden it was Abba Father, and the change indicates not indeed estrangement of heart, but certainly remoteness. Thus we have the sense of desertion, combined with the assurance which once breathed in the words, O God, Thou art my God.

Thus also it came to pass that He who never forfeited the most intimate communion and sunny smile of heaven, should yet give us an example at the last of that utmost struggle and sternest effort of the soul, which trusts without experience, without emotion, in the dark, because God is God, not because I am happy.

But they who would empty the death of Jesus of its sacrificial import, and leave only the attraction and inspiration of a sublime life and death, must answer the hard questions, How came God to forsake the Perfect One? Or, how came He to charge God with such desertion? His follower, twice using this very word, could boast that he was cast down yet not forsaken, and that at his first trial all men forsook him, yet the Lord stood by him (2 Cor. iv. 9; 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17). How came the disciple to be above his Master?

The only explanation is in His own word, that His life is a ransom in exchange for many (Mark x. 45). The chastisement of our peace, not the remorse of our guiltiness, was upon Him. No wonder that St. Mark, who turns aside from his narrative for no comment, no exposition, was yet careful to preserve this alone among the dying words of Christ.

And the Father heard His Son. At that cry the mysterious darkness passed away; and the soul of Jesus was relieved from its burden, so that He became conscious

of physical suffering; and the mockery of the multitude was converted into awe. It seemed to them that His Eloi might indeed bring Elias, and the great and notable day, and they were willing to relieve the thirst which no stoical hardness forbade that gentlest of all sufferers to confess. Thereupon the anguish that redeemed the world was over; a loud voice told that exhaustion was not complete; and yet Jesus "gave up the ghost." *

Through the veil, that is to say His flesh, we have boldness to enter into the holy place; and now that He had opened the way, the veil of the temple was rent asunder by no mortal hand, but downward from the top. The way into the holiest was visibly thrown open, when sin was expiated, which had forfeited our right of access.

And the centurion, seeing that His death itself was abnormal and miraculous, and accompanied with miraculous signs, said, Truly this was a righteous man. But such a confession could not rest there: if He was this, He was all He claimed to be; and the mockery of His enemies had betrayed the secret of their hate; He was the Son of God.

"When the centurion saw" . . . "There were also many women beholding." Who can overlook the connection? Their gentle hearts were not to be utterly overwhelmed: as the centurion saw and drew his inference, so they beheld, and felt, however dimly, amid sorrows that benumb the mind, that still, even in such wreck and misery, God was not far from Jesus.

When the Lord said, It is finished, there was not only an end of conscious anguish, but also of contempt and

* The ingenious and plausible attempt to show that His death was caused by a physical rupture of the heart has one fatal weakness. Death came too late for this; the severest pressure was already relieved.

insult. His body was not to see corruption, nor was a bone to be broken, nor should it remain in hostile hands.

Respect for Jewish prejudice prevented the Romans from leaving it to moulder on the cross, and the approaching Sabbath was not one to be polluted. And knowing this, Joseph of Arimathæa boldly went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. It was only secretly and in fear that he had been a disciple, but the deadly crisis had developed what was hidden, he had opposed the crime of his nation in their council, and in the hour of seeming overthrow he chose the good part. Boldly the timid one "went in," braving the scowls of the priesthood, defiling himself moreover, and forfeiting his share in the sacred feast, in hope to win the further defilement of contact with the dead.

Pilate was careful to verify so rapid a death; but when he was certain of the fact, "he granted the corpse to Joseph," as a worthless thing. His frivolity is expressed alike in the unusual verb* and substantive: he "freely-bestowed," he "gave away" not "the body" as when Joseph spoke of it, but "the corpse," the fallen thing, like a prostrated and uprooted tree that shall revive no more. Wonderful it is to reflect that God had entered into eternal union with what was thus given away to the only man of rank who cared to ask for it. Wonderful to think what opportunities of eternal gain men are content to lose; what priceless treasures are given away, or thrown away as worthless. Wonderful to imagine the feelings of Joseph in heaven to-day, as he gazes with gratitude and love upon the glorious Body which once, for a little, was consigned to his reverent care.

St. John tells us that Nicodemus brought a hundred pound weight of myrrh and aloes, and they together

* *I.e.* in the New Testament, where it occurs but once besides.

wrapped Him in these, in the linen which had been provided; and Joseph laid Him in his own new tomb, undesecrated by mortality.

And there Jesus rested. His friends had no such hope as would prevent them from closing the door with a great stone. His enemies set a watch, and sealed the stone. The broad moon of Passover made the night as clear as the day, and the multitude of strangers, who thronged the city and its suburbs, rendered any attempt at robbery even more hopeless than at another season.

What indeed could the trembling disciples of an executed pretender do with such an object as a dead body? What could they hope from the possession of it? But if they did not steal it, if the moral glories of Christianity are not sprung from deliberate mendacity, why was the body not produced, to abash the wild dreams of their fanaticism? It was fearfully easy to identify. The scourging, the cross, and the spear, left no slight evidence behind, and the broken bones of the malefactors completed the absolute isolation of the sacred body of the Lord.

The providence of God left no precaution unsupplied to satisfy honest and candid inquiry. It remained to be seen, would He leave Christ's soul in Hades, or suffer His Holy One (such is the epithet applied to the body of Jesus) to see corruption?

Meantime, through what is called three days and nights—a space which touched, but only touched, the confines of a first and third day, as well as the Saturday which intervened, Jesus shared the humiliation of common men, the divorce of soul and body. He slept as sleep the dead, but His soul was where He promised that the penitent should come, refreshed in Paradise.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHRIST RISEN.

"**And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the** ***mother*** of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early on the first day of the week, they come to the tomb when the sun was risen. And they were saying among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb? and looking up, they see that the stone is rolled back: for it was exceeding great. And entering into the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, arrayed in a white robe, and they were amazed. And he saith unto them, Be not amazed; ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, Which hath been crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold, the place where they laid Him! But go, tell His disciples and Peter, He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out, and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to any one; for they were afraid. Now when He was risen early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven devils. She went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, disbelieved. And after these things He was manifested in another form unto two of them, as they walked, on their way into the country. And they went away and told it unto the rest: neither believed they them. And afterward He was manifested unto the eleven themselves as they sat at meat; and He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."—MARK xvi. 1–18 (R.V.).

THE Gospels were not written for the curious but for the devout. They are most silent therefore where myth and legend would be most garrulous, and it is instructive to seek, in the story of Jesus, for anything similar to the account of the Buddha's enlightenment under the Bo tree. We read nothing of the interval in Hades; nothing of the entry of His crowned and immortal body into the presence chamber of God; nothing of the resurrection. Did He awake alone? Was He waited upon by the hierarchy of heaven, who robed Him in raiment unknown to men? We are only told what concerns mankind, the sufficient manifestation of Jesus to His disciples.

And to harmonise the accounts a certain effort is necessary, because they tell of interviews with men and women who had to pass through all the vicissitudes of despair, suspense, rapturous incredulity,* and faith. Each of them contributes a portion of the tale.

From St. John we learn that Mary Magdalene came early to the sepulchre, from St. Matthew that others were with her, from St. Mark that these women, dissatisfied with the unskilful ministrations of men (and men whose rank knew nothing of such functions), had brought sweet spices to anoint Him Who was about to claim their adoration; St. John tells how Mary, seeing the empty sepulchre, ran to tell Peter and John of its desecration; the others, that in her absence an angel told the glad tidings to the women; St. Mark, that Mary was the first to whom Jesus Himself appeared. And thenceforth the narrative more easily falls into its place.

* Can anything surpass that masterstroke of insight and descriptive power, "they still disbelieved for joy" (Luke xxiv. 41).

This confusion, however perplexing to thoughtless readers, is inevitable in the independent histories of such events, derived from the various parties who delighted to remember, each what had befallen himself.

But even a genuine contradiction would avail nothing to refute the substantial fact. When the generals of Henry the Fourth strove to tell him what passed after he was wounded at Aumale, no two of them agreed in the course of events which gave them victory. Two armies beheld the battle of Waterloo, but who can tell when it began? At ten o'clock, said the Duke of Wellington. At half past eleven, said General Alava, who rode beside him. At twelve according to Napoleon and Drouet; and at one according to Ney.

People who doubt the reality of the resurrection, because the harmony of the narratives is underneath the surface, do not deny these facts. They are part of history. Yet it is certain that the resurrection of Jesus colours the history of the world more powerfully to-day, than the events which are so much more recent.

If Christ were not risen, how came these despairing men and women by their new hope, their energy, their success among the very men who slew Him? If Christ be not risen, how has the morality of mankind been raised? Was it ever known that a falsehood exercised for ages a quickening and purifying power which no truth can rival?

From the ninth verse to the end of St. Mark's account it is curiously difficult to decide on the true reading. And it must be said that the note in the Revised Version, however accurate, does not succeed in giving any notion of the strength of the case in favour of the remainder of the Gospel. It tells us that the two oldest manuscripts omit them, but we do not read that in one of

these a space is left for the insertion of something, known by the scribe to be wanting there. Nor does it mention the twelve manuscripts of almost equal antiquity in which they are contained, nor the early date at which they were quoted.

The evidence appears to lean towards the belief that they were added in a later edition, or else torn off in an early copy from which some transcribers worked. But unbelief cannot gain anything by converting them into a separate testimony, of the very earliest antiquity, to events related in each of the other Gospels.

And the uncertainty itself will be wholesome if it reminds us that saving faith is not to be reposed in niceties of criticism, but in a living Christ, the power and wisdom of God. Jesus blamed men for thinking that they had eternal life in their inspired Scriptures, and so refusing to come for life to Him, of Whom those Scriptures testified. Has sober criticism ever shaken for one hour that sacred function of Holy Writ?

What then is especially shown us in the closing words of St. Mark?

Readiness to requite even a spark of grace, and to bless with the first tidings of a risen Redeemer the love which sought only to embalm His corpse. Tender care for the fallen and disheartened, in the message sent especially to Peter. Immeasurable condescension, such as rested formerly, a Babe, in a peasant woman's arms, and announced its Advent to shepherds, now appearing first of all to a woman "out of whom He had cast seven devils."

A state of mind among the disciples, far indeed from that rapt and hysterical enthusiasm which men have fancied, ready to be whirled away in a vortex of religious propagandism (and to whirl the whole world after

it), upon the impulse of dreams, hallucinations, voices mistaken on a misty shore, longings which begot convictions. Jesus Himself, and no second, no messenger from Jesus, inspired the zeal which kindled mankind. The disciples, mourning and weeping, found the glad tidings incredible, while Mary who had seen Him, believed. When two, as they walked, beheld Him in another shape, the rest remained incredulous, announcing indeed that He had actually risen and appeared unto Peter, yet so far from a true conviction that when He actually came to them, they supposed that they beheld a spirit (Luke xxiv. 34, 37). Yet He looked in the face those pale discouraged Galileans, and bade them go into all the world, bearing to the whole creation the issues of eternal life and death. And they went forth, and the power and intellect of the world are won. Whatever unbelievers think about individual souls, it is plain that the words of the Nazarene have proved true for communities and nations, He that believeth and is baptised has been saved, He that believeth not has been condemned. The nation and kingdom that has not served Christ has perished.

Nor does any one pretend that the agents in this marvellous movement were insincere. If all this was a dream, it was a strange one surely, and demands to be explained. If it was otherwise, no doubt the finger of God has come unto us.

THE ASCENSION.

"So then the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen."—MARK xvi. 19-20 (R.V.)

WE have reached the close of the great Gospel of the energies of Jesus, His toils, His manner, His searching gaze, His noble indignation, His love of children, the consuming zeal by virtue of which He was not more truly the Lamb of God than the Lion of the tribe of Judah. St. Mark has just recorded how He bade His followers carry on His work, defying the serpents of the world, and renewing the plague-stricken race of Adam. In what strength did they fulfil this commission? How did they fare without the Master? And what is St. Mark's view of the Ascension?

Here, as all through the Gospel, minor points are neglected. Details are only valued when they carry some aid for the special design of the Evangelist, who presses to the core of his subject at once and boldly. As he omitted the bribes with which Satan tempted Jesus, and cared not for the testimony of the Baptist when the voice of God was about to peal from heaven over the Jordan, as on the holy mount he told not the subject of which Moses and Elijah spoke, but how Jesus Himself predicted His death to His disciples, so now He is silent about the mountain slope, the final benediction, the cloud which withdrew Him from their sight and the angels who sent back the dazed apostles to their homes and their duties. It is not caprice nor haste that omits so much interesting information. His mind is fixed on a few central thoughts; what concerns

him is to link the mighty story of the life and death of Jesus with these great facts, that He was received up into Heaven, that He there sat down upon the right hand of God, and that His disciples were never forsaken of Him at all, but proved, by the miraculous spread of the early Church, that His power was among them still. St. Mark does not record the promise, but he asserts the fact that Christ was with them all the days. There is indeed a connection between his two closing verses, subtle and hard to render into English, and yet real, which suggests the notion of balance, of relation between the two movements, the ascent of Jesus, and the evangelisation of the world, such as exists, for example, between detachments of an army co-operating for a common end, so that our Lord, for His part, ascended, while the disciples, for their part, went forth and found Him with them still.

But the link is plainer which binds the Ascension to His previous story of suffering and conflict. It was "then," and "after He had spoken unto them," that "the Lord Jesus was received up." In truth His ascension was but the carrying forward to completion of His resurrection, which was not a return to the poor conditions of our mortal life, but an entrance into glory, only arrested in its progress until He should have quite convinced His followers that "it is I indeed," and made them understand that "thus it is written that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day," and filled them with holy shame for their unbelief, and with courage for their future course, so strange, so weary, so sublime.

There is something remarkable in the words, "He was received up into heaven." We habitually speak of Him as ascending, but Scripture more frequently

declares that He was the subject of the action of another, and was taken up. St. Luke tells us that, "while they worshipped, He was carried up into heaven," and again "He was received up. . . . He was taken up" (Luke xxiv. 51; Acts i. 2, 9). Physical interference is not implied: no angels bore Him aloft; and the narratives make it clear that His glorious Body, obedient to its new mysterious nature, arose unaided. But the decision to depart, and the choice of a time, came not from Him: He did not go, but was taken. Never hitherto had He glorified Himself. He had taught His disciples to be contented in the lowest room until the Master of the house should bid them come up higher. And so, when His own supreme victory is won, and heaven held its breath expectant and astonished, the conquering Lord was content to walk with peasants by the Lake of Galilee and on the slopes of Olivet until the appointed time. What a rebuke to us who chafe and fret if the recognition of our petty merits be postponed.

"He was received up into heaven!" What sublime mysteries are covered by that simple phrase. It was He who taught us to make, even of the mammon of unrighteousness, friends who shall welcome us, when mammon fails and all things mortal have deserted us, into everlasting habitations. With what different greetings, then, do men enter the City of God. Some converts of the death bed perhaps there are, who scarcely make their way to heaven, alone, unhailed by one whom they saved or comforted, and like a vessel which struggles into port, with rent cordage and tattered sails, only not a wreck. Others, who aided some few, sparing a little of their means and energies, are greeted and blessed by a scanty group. But even our chieftains and

leaders, the martyrs, sages and philanthropists whose names brighten the annals of the Church, what is their influence, and how few have they reached, compared with that great multitude whom none can number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, who cry with a loud voice, Salvation unto our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. Through Him it pleased the Father to reconcile all things unto Himself, through Him, whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens. And surely the supreme hour in the history of the universe was when, in flesh, the sore stricken but now the all-conquering Christ re-entered His native heaven.

And He sat down at the right hand of God. The expression is, beyond all controversy, borrowed from that great Psalm which begins by saying, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand," and which presently makes the announcement never revealed until then, "Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec" (Ps. cx. 1, 4). It is therefore an anticipation of the argument for the royal Priesthood of Jesus which is developed in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Now priesthood is a human function: every high priest is chosen from among men. And the Ascension proclaims to us, not the Divinity of the Eternal Word but the glorification of "the Lord Jesus;" not the omnipotence of God the Son, but that all power is committed unto Him Who is not ashamed to call us brethren, that His human hands wield the sceptre as once they held the reed, and the brows then insulted and torn with thorns are now crowned with many crowns. In the overthrow of Satan He won all, and infinitely more than all, of that vast bribe which Satan once offered for His homage, and the

angels for ever worship Him who would not for a moment bend His knee to evil.

Now since He conquered not for Himself but as Captain of our Salvation, the Ascension also proclaims the issue of all the holy suffering, all the baffled efforts, all the cross-bearing of all who follow Christ.

His High Priesthood is with authority. "Every high priest standeth," but He has for ever sat down on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, a Priest sitting upon His throne (Heb. viii. 1; Zech. vi. 13). And therefore it is His office, Who pleads for us and represents us, Himself to govern our destinies. No wonder that His early followers, with minds which He had opened to understand the Scriptures, were mighty to cast down strongholds. Against tribulation and anguish and persecution and famine and nakedness and peril and sword they were more than conquerors through Him. For He worked with them and confirmed His word with signs. And we have seen that He works with His people still, and still confirms His gospel, only withdrawing signs of one order as those of another kind are multiplied. Wherever they wage a faithful battle, He gives them victory. Whenever they cry to Him in anguish, the form of the Son of God is with them in the furnace, and the smell of fire does not pass upon them. Where they come, the desert blossoms as a rose; and where they are received, the serpents of life no longer sting, its fevers grow cool, and the demons which rend it are cast out.

THE GOSPEL

ACCORDING TO

ST. LUKE.

BY THE REV.

HENRY BURTON, M.A.

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CHAPTER I.

THE GENESIS OF THE GOSPEL.

THE four walls and the twelve gates of the Seer looked in different directions, but together they guarded, and opened into, one City of God. So the four Gospels look in different directions; each has its own peculiar aspect and inscription; but together they lead towards, and unveil, one Christ, "which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." They are the successive quarterings of the one Light. We call them "four" Gospels, though in reality they form but one, just as the seven arches of colour weave one bow; and that there should be four, and not three or five, was the purpose and design of the Mind which is above all minds. There are "diversities of operations" even in making Testaments, New or Old; but it is one Spirit who is "over all, and in all;" and back of all diversity is a heavenly unity—a unity that is not broken, but rather beautified, by the variety of its component parts.

Turning to the third Gospel, its opening sentences strike a key-note unlike the tone of the other three. Matthew, the Levite Apostle, schooled in the receipt of custom—where parleying and preambling were not allowed—goes to his subject with sharp abruptness, beginning his story with a "genesis," "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ." Mark, too, and John, without staying for any prelude, proceed at once to

their portrayals of the Divine Life, each starting with the same word "beginning"—though between the "beginning" of St. Mark and that of St. John there is room for an eternity. St. Luke, on the other hand, stays to give to his Gospel a somewhat lengthy preface, a kind of vestibule, where we become acquainted with the presence and personality of the verger, before passing within the temple proper.

It is true the Evangelist does not here inscribe his name; it is true that after inserting these lines of explanation, he loses sight of himself completely, with a "sublime repressing of himself" such as John did not know; but that he here throws the shadow of himself upon the page of Scripture, calling the attention of all people and ages to the "me also," shows clearly that the personal element cannot be eliminated from the question of inspiration. Light is the same in its nature; it moves only in straight lines; it is governed by fixed laws; but in its reflections it is infinitely varied, turning to purple, blue, or gold, according to the nature of the medium and reflecting substance. And what, indeed, is beauty, what the harmony of colours, but the visible music as the same light plays upon the diverse keys? Exactly the same law rules in inspiration. As the Divine Love needed an incarnation, an inshrining in human flesh, that the Divine Word might be vocal, so the Divine Light needs its incarnation too. Indeed, we can scarcely conceive of any revelation of the Divine Mind but as coming through a human mind. It needs the human element to analyze and to throw it forward, just as the electric spark needs the dull carbon-point to make it visible. Heaven and earth are here, as elsewhere, "threads of the same loom," and if we take out one, even the earthly woof of the humanities, we leave

only a tangle; and if it is true of works of art that "to know them we must know the man who produced them," it is equally important, if we would know the Scripture, that we have some knowledge of the scribe. And especially important is it here, for there are few books of Scripture on which the writer's own personality is more deeply impressed than on the Gospel of St. Luke. The "me also" is only legible in the third verse, but we may read it, between the lines, through the whole Gospel.

Concerning the life of St. Luke the facts are few. It has been thought by some that he was one of the "certain Greeks" who came to Jerusalem to worship; while others, again, suppose him to be the nameless one of the two Emmaus travellers. But both these suppositions are set aside by the fact that the Evangelist carefully separates himself from those who were "eye-witnesses," which he could not well have done had he taken part in those closing scenes of the Lord's life, or had he been honoured with that "infallible proof" of the Lord's resurrection. That he was a Gentile is evident; his speech bewrayeth him; for he speaks with a Grecian accent, while Greek idioms are sprinkled over his pages. Indeed, St. Paul speaks of him as not being of the "circumcision" (Col. iv. 11, 14), and he himself, in Acts i. 19, speaks of the dwellers at Jerusalem, and the Aceldama of "their" proper tongue. Tradition, with unanimous voice, represents him as a native of Antioch, in Syria.

Responding to the Divine Voice that bids him "write," St. Luke brings to the task new and special qualifications. Familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures—at least in their Septuagint form, as his many quotations show—intimately acquainted with the

Hebrew faith and ritual, he yet brings to his work a mind unwarped by its traditions. He knows nothing of that narrowness of spirit that Hebraism unconsciously engendered, with its insulation from the great outer world. His mount of vision was not Mount Zion, but a new Pisgah, lying outside the sacred borders, and showing him "all the kingdoms of the world," as the Divine thought of humanity took possession of him. And not only so, we must remember that his connection with Christianity has been mainly through St. Paul, who was the Apostle of the "uncircumcision." For months, if not for years, he has been his close companion, reading his innermost thoughts; and so long and so close together have they been, their two hearts have learned to beat in a perfect synchronism. Besides, we must not forget that the Gentile question—their *status* in the new kingdom, and the conditions demanded of them—had been the burning question of the early Church, and that it was at this same Antioch it had reached its height. It was at Antioch the Apostle Peter had "dissembled," so soon forgetting the lessons of the Cæsarean Pentecost, holding himself aloof from the Gentile converts until Paul felt constrained to rebuke him publicly; and it was to Antioch came the decree of the Jerusalem Council, that Magna Charta which recognized and enfranchised manhood, giving the privileges of the new kingdom to Gentiles, without imposing upon them the Judaic anachronism of circumcision. We can therefore well understand the bent of St. Luke's mind and the drift of his sympathies; and we may expect that his pen—though it is a reed shaken with the breath of a higher inspiration—will at the same time move in the direction of these sympathies.

And it is exactly this—its "**gentility,**" if we may be allowed to give a new accent and a new meaning to an old word—that is a prominent feature of the third Gospel. Not, however, that St. Luke decries Judaism, or that he denies the "advantage" the Jews have; he cannot do this without erasing Scripture and silencing history; but what he does is to lift up the Son of Man in front of their tabernacle of witness. He does not level down Judaism; he levels up Christianity, letting humanity absorb nationality. And so the Gospel of St. Luke is the Gospel of the world, greeting "all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues" with its "peace on earth." St. Matthew traces the genealogy of Christ back to Abraham; St. Luke goes farther back, to the fountain-head, where all the divergent streams meet and mingle, as he traces the descent to Adam, the Son of God. Matthew shows us the "wise men," lost in Jerusalem, and inquiring, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" But St. Luke gives, instead, the "good tidings" to "all people;" and then he repeats the angel song, which is the key-note of his Gospel, "Glory to God in the highest, . . . goodwill toward men." It is St. Luke only who records the first discourse at Nazareth, showing how in ancient times, even, the mercy of God flowed out towards a Gentile widow and a Gentile leper. St. Luke alone mentions the mission of the Seventy, whose very number was a prophecy of a world-wide Gospel, seventy being the recognized symbol of the Gentile world, as twelve stood for the Hebrew people. St. Luke alone gives us the parable of the Good Samaritan, showing that all the virtues did not reside in Israel, but that there was more of humanity, and so more of Divinity, in the compassionate Samaritan than in their priest and

Levite. St. Luke alone records the call of Zacchæus, the Gentile publican, telling how Jesus cancelled their laws of heredity, passing him up among the sons of Abraham. St. Luke alone gives us the twin parables of the lost coin and the lost man, showing how Jesus had come to seek and to save that which was lost, which was humanity, here, and there, and everywhere. And so there breathes all through this Gospel a catholic spirit, more pronounced than in the rest, a spirit whose rhythm and deep meaning have been caught in the lines—

> "There's a wideness in God's mercy,
> Like the wideness of the sea."

The only other fact of the Evangelist's life we will here notice is that of his profession; and we notice this simply because it enters as a factor into his work, reappearing there frequently. He was a physician; and from this fact some have supposed that he was a freedman, since many of the Roman physicians were of that class. But this by no means follows. All physicians were not freedmen; while the language and style of St. Luke show him to be an educated man, one, too, who walked in the upper classes of society. Where he speaks natively, as here in the introduction, he uses a pure Greek, somewhat rounded and ornate, in which there is a total absence of those rusticisms common in St. Mark. That he followed his calling at Troas, where he first joined St. Paul, is probable; but that he practised it on board one of the large corn-ships of the Mediterranean is a pure conjecture, for which even his nautical language affords no presumption; for one cannot be at sea for a few weeks—especially with an observant eye and attentive ear, as St. Luke's were—

without falling naturally into nautical language. One's speech soon tastes of salt.

The calling of a physician naturally develops certain powers of analysis and synthesis. It is the art of putting things together. From the seen or felt symtoms he traces out the unseen cause. Setting down the known quantities, by processes of comparison or of elimination he finds the unknown quantity, which is the disease, its nature and its seat. And so on the the pages of the third Gospel we frequently find the shadow of the physician. It appears even in his brief preface; for as he sits down with ample materials before him—on one side the first-hand testimony of "eye-witnesses," and on the other the many and somewhat garbled narratives of anonymous scribes—we see the physician-Evangelist exercising a judicious selection, and thus compounding or distilling his pure elixir. Then, too, a skilled and educated physician would find easy access into the higher circles of society, his very calling furnishing him with letters of introduction. And so, indeed, we find it. Our physician dedicates his Gospel, and also the "Acts," to, not the "most excellent," but the "most noble" Theophilus, giving to him the same title that he afterwards gave to Felix and to Festus. Perhaps its English equivalent would be "the honourable." At any rate it shows that this Theophilus was no mere myth, a locution for any "friend of God," but that he was a person of rank and influence, possibly a Roman governor. Then, too, St. Luke's mention of certain names omitted by the other Evangelists, such as Chuza and Manaen, would suggest that probably he had some personal acquaintance with the members of Herod's household. Be this as it may, we recognize the

"physician" in St. Luke's habits of observation, his attention to detail, his fondness for grouping together resemblances and contrasts, his fuller reference to miracles of healing, and his psychological observations. We find in him a student of the humanities. Even in his portrayal of the Christ it is the human side of the Divine nature that he emphasizes; while all through his Gospel, his thought of humanity, like a wide-reaching sky, overlooks and embraces all such earthly distinctions as position, sex, or race.

With a somewhat high-sounding word "Forasmuch," which here makes its solitary appearance in the pages of Scripture—a word, too, which, like its English equivalent, is a treble compound—the Evangelist calls our attention to his work, and states his reasons for undertaking it. It is impossible for us to fix either the date or the place where this Gospel was written, but probably it was some time between A.D. 58-60. Now, what was the position of the Church at that date, thirty-five years after the Crucifixion? The fiery tongues of Pentecost had flashed far and wide, and from their heliogram even distant nations had read the message of peace and love. Philip had witnessed the wonderful revival in "the (a) city of Samaria." Antioch, Cæsarea, Damascus, Lystra, Philippi, Athens, Rome—these names indicate, but do not attempt to measure, the wide and ever-widening circle of light. In nearly every town of any size there is the nucleus of a Church; while Apostles, Evangelists, and Christian merchants are proclaiming the new kingdom and the new laws everywhere. And since the visits of the Apostles would be necessarily brief, it would only be a natural and general wish that some permanent record should be made of their narratives and teaching. In other places,

which lay back of the line of Apostles' travel, the story would reach them, passed from mouth to mouth, with all the additions of rumour, and exaggerations of Eastern loquacity. It is to these ephemeral Gospels the Evangelist now refers; and distinguishing, as he does, the "many" from the "eye-witnesses" and "ministers of the word," he shows that he does not refer to the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark—which probably he has not seen—for one was an Apostle, and both were "eye-witnesses." There is no censure implied in these words, nor does the expression "taken in hand" in itself imply failure; but evidently, to St. Luke's mind, these manifold narratives were incomplete and unsatisfactory. They contain some of the truth, but not all that the world should know. Some are put together by unskilled hands, and some have more or less of fable blended with them. They need sifting, winnowing, that the chaff may be blown away, and the seed tares separated from the wheat. Such is the physician's reason for now assuming the *rôle* of an Evangelist. The "forasmuch," before being entered on the pages of his Scriptures, had struck upon the Evangelist's soul, setting it vibrating like a bell, and moving mind and hand alike in sympathy.

And so we see how, in ways simple and purely natural, Scripture grows. St. Luke was not conscious of any special influence resting upon him. He did not pose as an oracle or as the mouthpiece of an oracle, though he was all that, and vastly more. He does not even know that he is doing any great work; and who ever does? A generous, unselfish thought takes possession of him. He will sacrifice leisure and ease, that he may throw forward to others the light that has fallen upon his own heart and life. He will be a truth-

seeker, and a light-bearer for others. Here, then, we see how a human mind falls into gear with the Divine mind, and human thought gets into the rhythm and swing of the higher thought. Simply natural, purely human are all his processes of reasoning, comparing, and planning, and the whole Gospel is but the perfect bloom of this seed-thought. But whence came this thought? That is the question. Did it not grow out of these manifold narratives? and did not the narratives themselves grow out of the wonderful Life, the Life which was itself but a Divine Thought and Word incarnate? And so we cannot separate heaven from earth, we cannot eliminate the Divine from even our little lives; and though St. Luke did not recognize it as such—he was an ordinary man, doing an ordinary thing—yet we, standing a few centuries back, and seeing how the Church has hidden in her ark the omer of manna that he gathered, to be carried on and down till time itself shall be no more, we see another Apocalyptic vision, and we hear a Voice Divine that commands him "write." When St. Luke wrote, "It seemed good to me also," he doubtless wrote the pronoun small; for it was the "me" of his obscure, retiring self; but high above the human thought we see the Divine purpose, and as we watch, the smaller "me" grows into the ME, which is a shadow of the great I AM. And so while the "many" treatises, those which were purely human, have passed out of sight, buried deep in their unknown sepulchres, this Gospel has survived and become immortal—immortal because God was back of it, and God was in it.

So in the mind of St. Luke the thought ripens into a purpose. Since others "have taken in hand" to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which

have been "fulfilled among us," he himself will do the same; for has he not a special fitness for the task, and peculiar advantages? He has long been intimately associated with those who from the very first were "eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word," the chosen companion of one Apostle, and doubtless, owing to his visit to Jerusalem and to his prolonged residence at Cæsarea, personally acquainted with the rest. His shall not be a Gospel of surmise or of rumour; it shall only contain the record of facts—facts which he himself has investigated, and for the truth of which he gives his guarantee. The clause "having traced the course of all things accurately from the first"—which is a more exact rendering than that of the Authorized Version, "having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first"—shows us the keen, searching eye of the physician. He looks into things. He distinguishes between the To seem and the To be, the actual and the apparent. He takes nothing for granted, but proves all things. He investigates his facts before he endorses them, sounding them, as it were, and reading not only their outer voice, which may be assumed, and so untrue, but with his stethoscope of patient research listening for the unconscious voices that speak within, and so finding out the reality. He himself is committed to nothing. He is not anxious to make up a story. Himself a searcher after truth, his one concern is to know, and then to tell, the truth, naturally, simply, with no fictitious adornment or dressing up of his own. And having submitted the facts of the Divine Life to a close scrutiny, and satisfied himself of their absolute truth, and having thrown aside the many guesses and fables which somehow have woven themselves around the wonderful Name,

he will write down, in historical order as far as may be, the story, so that his friend Theophilus may know the "certainty of the things" in which he has been "instructed," or orally catechized, as the word would mean.

Where, then, it may be asked, is there room for inspiration? If the genesis of the Gospel is so purely human, where is there room for the touch of the Divine? Why should the Gospel of St. Luke be canonized, incorporated into Holy Scripture, while the writings of others are thrown back into an Apocrypha, or still farther back into oblivion? The very questions will suggest an answer. That touch of the Divine which we call inspiration is not always an equal touch. Now it is a pressure from above that is overwhelming. The writer is carried out of himself, borne up into regions where Sight and Reason in their loftiest flights cannot come, as the prophet foretells events no human mind could foresee, much less describe. In the case of St. Luke there was no need for this abnormal pressure, or for these prophetic ecstasies. He was to record, for the most part, facts of recent occurrence, facts that had been witnessed, and could now be attested, by persons still living; and a fact is a fact, whether it is inspired or no. Inspiration may record a fact, while others are omitted, showing that this fact has a certain value above others; but if it is true, inspiration itself cannot make it more true. Nevertheless, there is the touch of the Divine even here. What is the meaning of this new departure? for it is a new and a wide departure. Why does not Thomas write a Gospel? or Philip, or Paul? Why should the Evangelist-mantle be carried outside the bounds of the sacred land, to be thrown around

a Gentile, who cannot speak the sacred tongue except with a foreign Shibboleth? Ah, we see here the movings of the Holy Ghost! selecting the separate agents for the separate tasks, and dividing to "every man severally as He will." And not only does the Holy Spirit summon him to the work, He qualifies him for it, furnishing him with materials, and guiding his mind as to what shall be omitted and what retained. It is the same Spirit, who moved "holy men of old" to speak and write the things of God, who now touches the mind and heart of the four Evangelists, enabling them to give the four versions of the one Story, in different language, and with sundry differences of detail, but with no contradiction of thought, each being, in a sense, the complement of the rest, the four quarters making one rounded and perfect whole.

Perhaps at first sight our subject may not seem to have any reference to our smaller lives; for who of us can be Evangelists or Apostles, in the highest meaning of the words? And yet it has, if we look into it, a very practical bearing upon our lives, even the commonplace, every-day life. Whence come our gifts? Who makes these gifts to differ? Who gives us the differing taste and nature? for we are not consulted as to our nature any more than as to our nativities. The fact is, our "human" is touched by the Divine at every point. What are the chequered scenes of our lives but the black or the white squares to which the Unseen Hand moves us at will? Earth's problem is but Heaven's purpose. And are not *we*, too, writing scriptures? putting God's thoughts into words and deeds, so that men may read them and know them? Verily we are; and our writing is for eternity. In the volume of our book are no omissions

or erasures. Listen, then, to the heavenly call. Be obedient to your heavenly vision. Leave mind and heart open to the play of the Divine Spirit. Keep self out of sight. Delight in God's will, and do it. So will you make your lowlier life another Testament, written over with Gospels and Epistles, and closing at last with an Apocalypse.

CHAPTER II.

THE MUTE PRIEST.

LUKE i. 5-25, 57-80.

AFTER his personal prelude, our Evangelist goes on to give in detail the pre-Advent revelations, so connecting the thread of his narrative with the broken-off thread of the Old Testament. His language, however, suddenly changes its character and accent; and its frequent Hebraisms show plainly that he is no longer giving his own words, but that he is simply recording the narratives as they were told him, possibly by some member of the Holy Family.

"There was in the days of Herod, king of Judæa." Even the surface-reader of Scripture will observe how little is made in its pages of the time-element. There is a purposed vagueness in its chronology, which scarcely accords with our Western ideas of accuracy and precision. We observe times and seasons. We strike off the years with the clang of bells or the hush of solemn services. Each day with us is lifted up into prominence, having a personality and history all its own, and as we write its history, we keep it clear of all its to-morrows and its yesterdays. And so the day grows naturally into a date, and dates combine into chronologies, where everything is sharp, exact. Not so, however, was it, or indeed is it, in the Eastern

world. Time there, if we may speak temporally, was of little moment. To that slow-moving and slow-thinking world one day was a trifle, something atomic; it took a number of them to make an appreciable quantity. And so they divided their time, in ordinary speech, not minutely as we do, but into larger periods, measuring its distances by the shadows of their striking events. Why is it that we have four Gospels, and in fact a whole New Testament, without a date? for it cannot possibly be a chance omission. Is the time-element so subdued and set back, lest the "things temporal" should lead off our minds from the "things spiritual and eternal"? For what is time, after all, but a negative quantity? an empty space, in itself all silent and dead, until our thoughts and deeds strike against it and make it vocal? Nay, even in the heavenly life we see the same losing of the time-element, for we read, "There should be time no longer." Not that it will then disappear, swallowed up in that infinite duration we call eternity. That would make heaven a confusion; for to finite minds eternity itself must come in measured beats, striking, like the waves along the shore, in rhythmic intervals. But *our* time will be no longer. It must needs be transfigured, ceasing to be earthly, that it may become heavenly in its measurement and in its speech. And so in the Bible, which is a Divine-human book, written for the ages, God has purposely veiled the times, at any rate the "days" of earthly reckoning. Even the day of our Lord's birth, and the day of His death, our chronologies cannot determine: we measure, we guess, but it is randomly, like the blinded men of Sodom, who wearied themselves to find the door. In Heaven's reckoning deeds are more than days.

Time-beats by themselves are only broken silences, but put a soul among them, and you make songs, anthems, and all kinds of music. "In those days" may be a common Hebraism, but may it not be something more? may it not be an idiom of celestial speech, the heavenly way of referring to earthly things? At any rate we know this, that while Heaven is careful to give us the purpose, the promise, and the fulfilment, the Divine Spirit does not care to give us the exact moment when the promise became a realization. And that it is so shows that it is best it should be so. Silence sometimes may be better than speech.

But in saying all this we do not say that Heaven is unobservant of earthly times and seasons. They are a part of the Divine order, stamped on all lives, on all worlds. Our days and nights keep their alternate step; our seasons observe their processional order, singing in antiphonal responses; while our world, geared in with other worlds, strikes off our earthly years and days with an absolute precision. So, now the time of the Advent has been Divinely chosen for whole millenniums unalterably fixed; nor have the cries of Israel's impatient hopes been allowed to hurry forward the Divine purpose, so making it premature. But why should the Advent be so long delayed? In our off-handed way of thinking we might have supposed the Redeemer would have come directly after the Fall; and as far as Heaven was concerned, there was no reason why the Incarnation and the Redemption should not be effected immediately. The Divine Son was even then prepared to lay aside His glories, and to become incarnate. He might have been born of the Virgin of Eden, as well as of the Virgin of Galilee; and even then He might have offered unto God that

perfect obedience by which the "many are made righteous." Why, then, this strange delay, as the months lengthen into years, and the years into centuries? The Patriarchs come and go, and only see the promise "afar off." Then come centuries of oppression, as Canaan is completely eclipsed by the dark shadow of Egypt; then the Exodus, the wanderings, the conquest. The Judges administer a rough-handed justice; Kings play with their little crowns; Prophets rebuke and prophesy, telling of the "Wonderful" who shall be; but still the Messiah delays His coming. Why this strange postponement of the world's hopes, as if prophecy dealt in illusions only? We find the answer in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (chap. iv. 4). The "fulness of the time" was not yet come. The time was maturing, but was not yet ripe. Heaven was long ago prepared for an Incarnation, but Earth was not; and had the Advent occurred at an earlier stage of the world's history, it would have been an anachronism the age would have misunderstood. There must be a leading up to God's gifts, or His blessings cease to be blessings. The world must be prepared for the Christ, or virtually He is no Christ, no Saviour to them. The Christ must come into the world's mind as a familiar thought, He must come into the world's heart as a deep-felt need, before He can come as the Word Incarnate.

And when is this "fulness of the time"? "In the days of Herod, king of Judæa." Such is the phrase that now strikes the Divine hour, and leads in the dawn of a new dispensation. And what dark days were those to the Hebrew people, when on the throne of their David sat that Idumean shadow of the dread Cæsar! Their land swarms with Gentile hordes, and

on the soil devoted to Jehovah rise stately, splendid temples, dedicated to strange gods. It is one irruption of Paganism, as if the Roman Pantheon had emptied itself upon the Holy Land. Nay, it seemed as if the Hebrew faith itself would become extinct, strangled by heathen fables, or at any rate that she would survive, only the ghost of her other self, walking like an apparition, with veiled face and sealed lips, amid the scenes of her former glories. "The days of Herod" were the Hebrew midnight, but they give us the Bright and Morning Star. And so upon this dial-plate of Scripture the great Herod, with all his royalties, is nothing more than the dark, empty shadow which marks a Divine hour, "the fulness of the time."

Israel's corporate life began with four centuries of silence and oppression, when Egypt gave them the doubled task, and Heaven grew strangely still, giving them neither voice nor vision. Is it but one of the chance repetitions of history that Israel's national life should end, too, with four hundred years of silence? for such is the coincidence, if, indeed, we may not call it something more. It is, however, just such a coincidence as the Hebrew mind, quick to trace resemblances and to discern signs, would grasp firmly and eagerly. It would revive their long-deferred and dying hopes, overlaying the near future with its gold. Possibly it was this very coincidence that now transformed their hope into expectation, and set their hearts listening for the advent of the Messiah. Did not Moses come when the task was doubled? And was not the four hundred years' silence broken by the thunders of the Exodus, as the I AM, once again asserting Himself, "sent redemption to His people"? And so, counting back their silent years since Heaven's last voice came

to them through their prophet Malachi, they caught in its very silences a sound of hope, the footfall of the forerunner, and the voice of the coming Lord. But where, and how, shall the long silence be broken? We must go for our answer—and here, again, we see a correspondence between the new Exodus and the old—to the tribe of Levi, and to the house of Amram and Jochebed.

Residing in one of the priestly cities of the hill-country of Judæa—though not in Hebron, as is commonly supposed, for it is most unlikely that a name so familiar and sacred in the Old Testament would here be omitted in the New—was "a certain priest named Zacharias." Himself a descendant of Aaron, his wife, too, was of the same lineage; and besides being "of the daughters of Aaron," she bore the name of their ancestral mother, "Elisabeth." Like Abraham and Sarah, they were both well advanced in years, and childless. But if they were not allowed to have any lien upon posterity, throwing themselves forward into future generations, they made up the lack of earthly relationships by cultivating the heavenly. Forbidden, as they thought, to look forward down the lines of earthly hopes, they could and did look heavenward; for we read that they were both "righteous"—a word implying a Mosaic perfection—"walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." We may not be able, perhaps, to give the precise distinction between "commandments" and "ordinances," for they were sometimes used interchangeably; but if, as the general use of the words allows us, we refer the "commandments" to the moral, and the "ordinances" to the ceremonial law, we see how wide is the ground they cover, embracing, as they do, the (then) "whole duty of man." Rarely, if ever,

do the Scriptures speak in such eulogistic terms; and that they should here be applied to Zacharias and Elisabeth shows that they were advanced in saintliness, as well as in years. Possibly St. Luke had another object in view in giving us the portraits of these two pre-Advent Christians, completing in the next chapter the quarternion, by his mention of Simeon and Anna. It is somewhat strange, to say the least, that the Gentile Evangelist should be the one to give us this remarkable group—the four aged Templars, who, "when" it was yet dark, rose to chant their matins and to anticipate the dawn. Whether the Evangelist intended it or not, his narrative salutes the Old, while it heralds the New dispensation, paying to that Old a high though unconscious tribute. It shows us that Hebraism was not yet dead; for if on its central stem, within the limited area of its Temple courts, such a cluster of beautiful lives could be found, who will tell the harvest of its outlying branches? Judaism was not altogether a piece of mechanism, elaborate and exact, with a soulless, metallic click of rites and ceremonies. It was an organism, living and sentient. It had nerves and blood. Possessed of a heart itself, it touched the hearts of its children. It gave them aspirations and inspirations without number; and even its shadows were the interpreters, as they were the creations, of the heavenly light. And if now it is doomed to pass away, outdated and superseded, it is not because it is bad, worthless; for it was a Divine conception, the "good" thing, preparing for and proclaiming God's "better thing." Judaism was the "glorious angel, keeping the gates of light;" and now, behold, she swings back the gates, welcomes the Morning, and herself then disappears.

It is the autumn service for the course of Abia—which is the eighth of the twenty-four courses into which the priesthood was divided—and Zacharias proceeds to Jerusalem, to perform whatever part of the service the lot may assign to him. It is probably the evening of the Sabbath—the presence of the multitude would almost imply that—and this evening the lot gives to Zacharias the coveted distinction—which could only come once in a lifetime—of burning incense in the Holy Place. At a given signal, between the slaying and the offering of the lamb, Zacharias, barefooted and robed in white, passes up the steps, accompanied by two assistants, one bearing a golden censer containing half a pound of the sweet-smelling incense, the other bearing a golden vessel of burning coals taken from the altar. Slowly and reverently they pass within the Holy Place, which none but Levites are permitted to enter; and having arranged the incense, and spread the live coals upon the altar, the assistants retire, leaving Zacharias alone—alone in the dim light of the seven-branched candlestick, alone beside that veil he may not uplift, and which hides from his sight the Holy of Holies, where God dwells "in the thick darkness." Such is the place, and such the supreme moment, when Heaven breaks the silence of four hundred years.

It is no concern of ours to explain the phenomenon that followed, or to tone down its supernatural elements. Given an Incarnation, and then the supernatural becomes not only probable, but necessary. Indeed, we could not well conceive of any new revelation without it; and instead of its being a weakness, a blemish on the page of Scripture, it is rather a proof of its heavenliness, a hall-mark that stamps its Divinity. Nor is there any need, believing as we do in the existence of

intelligences other and higher than ourselves, that we apologize for the appearance of angels, here and elsewhere, in the story; such deference to Sadducean doubts is not required.

Suddenly, as Zacharias stands with uplifted hands, joining in the prayers offered by the silent "multitude" without, an angel appears. He stands "on the right side of the altar of incense," half-veiled by the fragrant smoke, which curling upwards, filled the place. No wonder that the lone priest is filled with "fear," and that he is "troubled"—a word implying an outward tremor, as if the very body shook with the unwonted agitation of the soul. The angel does not at first announce his name, but seeks rather to calm the heart of the priest, stilling its tumult with a "Fear not," as Jesus stilled the waters with His "Peace." Then he makes known his message, speaking in language most homely and most human: "Thy prayer is heard." Perhaps a more exact rendering would be, "Thy request was granted," for the substantive implies a specific prayer, while the verb indicates a "hearing" that becomes an "assenting." What the prayer was we may gather from the angel's words; for the whole message, both in its promise and its prophecy, is but an amplification of its first clause. To the Jew, childlessness was the worst of all bereavements. It implied, at least they thought so, the Divine displeasure; while it effectually cut them off from any personal share in those cherished Messianic hopes. To the Hebrew heart the message, "Unto you a son is born," was the music of a lower Gospel. It marked an epoch in their life-history; it brought the fulfilment of their desires, and a wealth of added dignities. And Zacharias had prayed, earnestly and long, that a son might be

born to them; but the bright hope, with the years, had grown distant and dim, until at last it had dropped down beyond the horizon of their thoughts, and become an impossibility. But those prayers were heard, yea, and granted, too, in the Divine purpose; and if the answer has been delayed, it was that it might come freighted with a larger blessing.

But in saying that this was the specific prayer of Zacharias we do not wish to disparage his motives, confining his thoughts and aspirations within a circle so narrow and selfish. This lesser hope of offspring, like a satellite, revolved around the larger hope of a Messiah, and indeed grew out of it. It drew all its brightness and all its beauty from that larger hope, the hope that lighted up the dark Hebrew sky with the auroras of a new and fadeless dawn. When mariners "take the sun," as they call it, reading from its disc their longitudes, they bring it down to their horizon-level. They get the higher in the lower vision, and the real direction of their looks is not the apparent direction. And if Zacharias' thoughts and prayers seem to have an earthward drift, his soul looks higher than his speech; and if he looks along the horizon-level of earthly hopes, it is that he may read the heavenly promise. It is not *a* son that he is looking for, but *the* Son, the "Seed" in whom "all the families of the earth shall be blessed." And so, when the silent tongue regains its powers of speech, it gives its first and highest doxologies for that other Child, who is Himself the promised "redemption" and a "horn of salvation;" his own child he sets back, far back in the shadow (or rather the light) of Him whom he calls the "Lord." It is the near realization of both these hopes that the angel now announces.

A son shall be born to them, even in their advanced years, and they shall call his name "John," which means "The Lord is gracious." "Many will rejoice with them at his birth," for that birth will be the awakening of new hopes, the first hour of a new day. "Great in the sight of the Lord," he must be a Nazarite, abstaining wholly from "wine and strong drink"—the two Greek words including all intoxicants, however made. "Filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb"—that original bias or propensity to evil, if not obliterated, yet more than neutralized—he shall be the Elijah (in spirit and in power) of Malachi's prophecy, turning many of Israel's children "to the Lord their God." "Going before Him"—and the antecedent of "Him" must be "the Lord their God" of the preceding verse, so early is the purple of Divinity thrown around the Christ—he "shall turn the hearts of fathers to their children," restoring peace and order to domestic life; and the "disobedient" he shall incline "to walk in the wisdom of the just" (R.V.), bringing back the feet that have erred and slipped to "the paths of uprightness," which are the "ways of wisdom." In short, he shall be the herald, making ready a people prepared for the Lord, running before the Royal chariot, proclaiming the coming One, and preparing His way, then leaving his own little footprints to disappear, thrown up in the chariot-dust of Him who was greater and mightier than he.

We can easily understand, even if we may not apologize for, the incredulity of Zacharias. There are crises in our life when, under profound emotion, Reason herself seems bewildered, and Faith loses her steadiness of vision. The storm of feeling throws the reflective powers into confusion, and thought becomes

blurred and indistinct, and speech incoherent and wild. And such a crisis was it now, but intensified to the mind of Zacharias by all these additions of the supernatural. The vision, with its accessories of place and time, the message, so startling, even though so welcome, must necessarily produce a strange perturbation of soul; and what surprise need there be that when the priest does speak it is in the lisping accents of unbelief? Could it well have been otherwise? Peter "wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision;" and though Zacharias has none of these doubts of unreality—it is to him no dream of the moment's ecstasy—still he is not yet aware of the rank and dignity of his angel-visitant, while he is perplexed at the message, which so directly contravenes both reason and experience. He does not doubt the Divine power, let it be observed, but he does seek for a sign that the angel speaks with Divine authority. "Whereby shall I know this?" he asks, reminding us by his question of Jacob's "Tell me thy name." The angel replies, in substance, "You ask whereby you may know this; that is, you wish to know by whose authority I declare this message to you. Well, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak unto you, and to bring you these good tidings. And since you ask for a sign, an endorsement of my message, you shall have one. I put the seal of silence upon your lips, and you shall not be able to speak until the day when these things shall come to pass, because you believed not my words." Then the vision ends; Gabriel returns to the songs and anthems of the skies, leaving Zacharias to carry, in awful stillness of soul, this new "secret of the Lord."

This infliction of dumbness upon Zacharias has

generally been regarded as a rebuke and punishment for his unbelief; but if we refer to the parallel cases of Abraham and of Gideon, such is not Heaven's wonted answer to the request for a sign. We must understand it rather as the proof Zacharias sought, something at once supernatural and significant, that should help his stumbling faith. Such a sign, and a most effective one, it was. Unlike Gideon's dew, that would soon evaporate, leaving nothing but a memory, this was ever present, ever felt, at least until faith was exchanged for sight. Nor was it dumbness simply, for the word (ver. 22) rendered "speechless" implies inability to hear as well as inability to speak; and this, coupled with the fact mentioned in ver. 62, that "they made signs to him"—which they would scarcely have done could he have heard their voices—compels us to suppose that Zacharias had suddenly become deaf as well as dumb. Heaven put the seal of silence upon his lips and ears, that so its own voice might be more clear and loud; and so the profound silences of Zacharias' soul were but the blank spaces on which Heaven's sweet music was written.

How long the interview with the angel lasted we cannot tell. It must, however, have been brief; for at a given signal, the stroke of the Magrephah, the attendant priest would re-enter the Holy Place, to light the two lamps that had been left unlighted. And here we must look for the "tarrying" that so perplexed the multitude, who were waiting outside, in silence, for the benediction of the incensing priest. Re-entering the Holy Place, the attendant finds Zacharias smitten as by a sudden paralysis—speechless, deaf, and overcome by emotion. What wonder that the strange excitement makes them oblivious of time, and, for the moment,

all-forgetful of their Temple duties! The priests are in their places, grouped together on the steps leading up to the Holy Place; the sacrificing priest has ascended the great brazen altar, ready to cast the pieces of the slain lamb upon the sacred fire; the Levites stand ready with their trumpets and their psalms—all waiting for the priests who linger so long in the Holy Place. At length they appear, taking up their position on the top of the steps, above the rows of priests, and above the silent multitude. But Zacharias cannot pronounce the usual benediction to-day. The "Jehovah bless thee and keep thee" is unsaid; the priest can only "beckon" to them, perhaps laying his finger on the silent lips, and then pointing to the silent heavens—to them indeed silent, but to himself all vocal now.

And so the mute priest, after the days of his ministration are completed, returns to his home in the hill-country, to wait the fulfilment of the promises, and out of his deep silences to weave a song that should be immortal; for the *Benedictus*, whose music girdles the world to-day, before it struck upon the world's ear and heart, had, through those quiet months, filled the hushed temple of his soul, lifting up the priest and the prophet among the poets, and passing down the name of Zacharias as one of the first sweet singers of the new Israel.

And so the Old meets, and merges into the New and at the marriage it is the speaking hands of the mute priest that join together the two Dispensations, as each gives itself to the other, never more to be put asunder, but to be "no longer twain, but one," one Purpose, one Plan, one Divine Thought, one Divine Word.

CHAPTER III.

THE GOSPEL PSALMS.

UNLIKE modern church builders, St. Luke sets his chancel by the porch. No sooner have we passed through the vestibule of his Gospel than we find ourselves within a circle of harmonies. On the one side are Zacharias and Simeon, the one chanting his *Benedictus*, and the other his *Nunc Dimittis*. Facing them, as if in antiphon, are Elisabeth and Mary, the one singing her *Beatitude*, and the other her *Magnificat;* while overhead, in the frescoed and starlighted sky, are vast multitudes of the heavenly host, enriching the Advent music with their *Glorias*. What means this grand irruption of song? and why is St. Luke, the Gentile Evangelist, the only one who repeats to us these Hebrew psalms? At first it would seem as if their natural place would be as a prelude to St. Matthew's Gospel, which is the Gospel of the Hebrews. But strangely enough, St. Matthew passes them by in silence, just as he omits the two angelic visions. St. Matthew is evidently intent on one thing. Beginning a New Testament, as he is, he seems especially anxious that there shall be no rent or even seam between the Old and the New; and so, in his first pages, after giving us the genealogy, running the line of descent up to Abraham, he laces up the threads of his narrative with

the broken-off threads of the old prophecies, so that the written Word may be a vestment of the Incarnate Word, which shall be "without seam, woven from the top throughout." And so really the Advent hymns would not have suited St. Matthew's purpose. Their ring would not have been in accord with the tone of his story; and had we found them in his first chapters we should instinctively have felt that they were out of place, as if we saw a rose blossoming on a wide-spread oak.

St. Luke, however, is portraying the Son of Man. Coming to redeem humanity, he shows how He was first born into that humanity, making His advent in a purely human fashion. And so the two conceptions form a fit beginning for his Gospel; while over the Divine Birth and Childhood he lingers reverently and long, paying it, however, only the homage Heaven had paid it before. Then, too, was there not a touch of poetry about our Evangelist? Tradition has been almost unanimous in saying that he was a painter; and certainly in the grouping of his figures, and his careful play upon the lights and shadows, we can discover traces of his artistic skill, in word-painting at any rate. His was evidently a soul attuned to harmonies, quick to discern any accordant or discordant strains. Nor must we forget that St. Luke's mind is open to certain occult influences, whose presence we may indeed detect, but whose power we are not able to gauge. As we have already seen, it was the manifold narratives of anonymous writers that first moved him to take up the pen of the historian; and to those narratives we doubtless owe something of the peculiar cast and colouring of St. Luke's story. It is with the Nativity that tradition would be most likely to take liberties. The facts of

the Advent, strange enough in themselves, would at the hands of rumour undergo a process of developing, like the magnified and somewhat grotesque shadows of himself the traveller casts on Alpine mists. It was doubtless owing to these enlargements and distortions of tradition that St. Luke was led to speak of the Advent so fully, going into the minutiæ of detail, and inserting, as is probable, from the Hebrew tone of these first two chapters, the account as given orally, or written, by some members of the Holy Family.

It must be admitted that to some inquiring and honest minds these Advent psalms have been a difficulty, an enigma, if not a stumbling-block. As the bells that summon to worship half-deafen the ear of the worshipper on a too near approach, or they become merely a confused and unmeaning noise if he climbs up into the belfry and watches the swing of their brazen lips, so this burst of music in our third Gospel has been too loud for certain sensitive ears. It has shaken somewhat the foundations of their faith. They think it gives an unreality, a certain mythical flavour, to the story, that these four pious people, who have always led a quiet, prosaic kind of life, should now suddenly break out into impromptu songs, and when these are ended lapse again into complete silence, like the century plant, which throws out a solitary blossom in the course of a hundred years. And so they come to regard these Hebrew psalms as an interpolation, an afterthought, thrown into the story for effect. But let us not forget that we are dealing now with Eastern mind, which is naturally vivacious, imaginative, and highly poetical. Even our colder tongue, in this glacial period of nineteenth-century civilization, is full of poetry. The language of common

every-day life—to those who have ears to hear—is full of tropes, metaphors, and parables. Take up the commonest words of daily speech, and put them to your ear, and they will sing like shells from the sea. There are whole poems in them—epics, idylls, of every sort; and let our colder speech get among the sweet influences of religion, and like the iceberg adrift in the Gulf Stream, it loses its rigidity and frigidity at once, melting in liquid, rhythmic measures, throwing itself away in hymns and *jubilates*. The fact is, the world is full of music. As the Sage of Chelsea said, "See deep enough, and you see musically, the heart of Nature being everywhere music if you can only reach it." And it is so. You can touch nothing but there are harmonies slumbering within it, or itself is a stray note of some grander song. Dead wood from the forest, dead ore from the mine, dead tusks of the beast—these are the "base things" that strike our music; and only put a mind within them, and a living soul with a living touch before them, and you have songs and anthems without number.

But to Eastern minds poetry was a sort of native language. Its inspiration was in the air. Their ordinary speech was ornate and efflorescent, throwing itself out in simile and hyperbole. It only needed some small excitement, and they fell naturally into the couplet form of utterance. Even to-day the children swing under the mulberry-trees to songs and choruses; hucksters extol their wares in measured verse; and the Bethany fruit-girl sings in the market, "O lady, take of our fruit, without money and without price: it is yours; take all that you will"! And so it need not surprise us, much less trouble us, that Simeon and Elisabeth, Zacharias and Mary, should each speak in

measured cadences. Their speech blossomed with flowers of rhetoric, just as naturally as their hills were ablaze with daisies and anemones. Besides, they were now under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We read, "Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost;" and again, Zacharias was "filled with the Holy Ghost;" Simeon "came in the Spirit into the Temple;" while Mary now seemed to live in one conscious, constant inspiration. It is said that "a poet is born, not made;" and if he be not thus "free-born" no "great sum," either of gold or toil, will ever pass him up within the favoured circle. And the same is true of the poet's creations. Sacred hymns are not the product of the unaided intellect. They do not come at the bidding of any human will. They are inspirations. There is the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit in their conception. The human mind, heart, and lips are but the instrument, a kind of Æolian lyre, played upon by the Higher Breath, which comes and goes—how, the singer himself can never tell; for

"In the song
The singer has been lost."

It was when "filled with the Spirit" that Bezaleel put into his gold and silver the thoughts of God; it was when the Spirit of God came upon him that Balaam took up his parable, putting into stately numbers Israel's forward march and endless victories. And so the sacred psalm is the highest type of inspiration; it is a voice from no earthly Parnassus, but from the Mount of God itself—the nearest approach to the celestial harmonies, the harmonies of that city whose very walls are poetry, and whose gates are praise.

And so, after all, it was but fitting and perfectly natural that the Gospel that Heaven had been so long time

preparing should break upon the world amid the harmonies of music. Instead of apologizing for its presence, as if it were but an interlude improvised for the occasion, we should have noted and mourned its absence, as when one mourns for "the sound of a voice that is still." When the ark of God was brought up from Baale Judah it was encircled with one wide wreath of music, a travelling orchestra of harps and psalteries, castanets and cymbals; and as now that Ark of all the promises is borne across from the Old to the New Dispensation, as the promise becomes a fulfilment, and the hope a realization, shall there not be the voice of song and gladness? Our sense of the fitness of things expects it; Heaven's law of the harmonies demands it; and had there not been this burst of praise and song, we should have listened for the very stones to cry out, rebuking the strange silence. But the voice was not silent. The singers were there, in their places; and they sang, not because they would, but because they must. A heavenly pressure, a sweet constraint, was upon them. If Wealth lays down her tribute of gold, with frankincense and myrrh, Poetry weaves for the Holy Child her beautiful songs, and crowns Him with her fadeless amaranth; and so around the earthly cradle of the Lord, as around His heavenly throne, we have angelic songs, and "the voices of harpers, harping with their harps."

Turning now to the four Gospel-psalmists—not, however, to analyze, but to listen to their song—we meet first with Elisabeth. This aged daughter of Aaron, and wife of Zacharias, as we have seen, resided somewhere in the hill-country of Judæa, in their quiet, childless home. Righteous, blameless, and devout, religion to her was no mere form; it was her life.

The Temple services, with which she was closely associated, were to her no cold clatter of dead rites, they were realities, full of life and full of music, as her heart had caught their deeper meaning. But the Temple, while it attracted her thoughts and hopes, did not enclose them; its songs and services were to her but so many needles, swinging round on their marble pivot, and pointing beyond to the Living God, the God who dwelt not in temples made with hands, but who, then as now, inhabits the purified temple of the heart. Long past the time when motherly hopes were possible, the fretting had subsided, and her spirit had become, first acquiescent, then quiescent. But these hopes had been miraculously rekindled, as she slowly read the vision of the Temple from the writing-table of her dumb husband. The shadow of her dial had gone backward; and instead of its being evening, with gathering shadows and ever-lessening light, she found herself back in the glow of the morning, her whole life lifted to a higher level. She was to be the mother, if not of the Christ, yet of His forerunner. And so the Christ was near at hand, this was certain, and she had the secret prophecy and promise of His advent. And Elisabeth finds herself exalted—borne up, as it were, into Paradise, among visions and such swells of hosannas that she cannot utter them; they are too sweet and too deep for her shallow words. Was it not this, the storm of inward commotion, that drove her to hide herself for the five months? Heaven has come so near to her, such thoughts and visions fill her mind, that she cannot bear the intrusions and jars of earthly speech; and Elisabeth passes into a voluntary seclusion and silence, keeping strange company with the dumb and deaf Zacharias.

At length the silence is broken by the unexpected appearance of her Nazareth relative. Mary, fresh from her hasty journey, "entered into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elisabeth." It is a singular expression, and evidently denotes that the visit of the Virgin was altogether unlooked for. There is no going out to meet the expected guest, as was common in Eastern hospitalities; there was even no welcome by the gate; but like an apparition, Mary passes within, and salutes the surprised Elisabeth, who returns the salutation, not, however, in any of the prescribed forms, but in a benediction of measured verse:—

"Blessed art thou among women,
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb!
And whence is this to me,
That the mother of my Lord should come unto me?
For, behold, when the voice of thy salutation came into mine ears
The babe leaped in my womb for joy.
And blessed is she that believed,
For there shall be a fulfilment of the things which have been spoken
to her from the Lord."

The whole canticle—and it is Hebrew poetry, as its parallelisms and strophes plainly show—is one apostrophe to the Virgin. Striking the key-note in its "Blessed art thou," the "thou" moves on, distinct and clear, amid all variations, to the end, reaching its climax in its central phrase, "The mother of my Lord." As one hails the morning star, not so much for its own light as for its promise of the greater light, the day-spring that is behind it, so Elisabeth salutes the morning star of the new dawn, at the same time paying homage to the Sun, whose near approach the star heralds. And why is Mary so blessed among women? Why should Elisabeth, forgetting the dignity of years, bow so deferentially before her youthful relative, crowning her

with a song? Who has informed her of the later revelation at Nazareth? It is not necessary to suppose that Elisabeth, in her seclusion, had received any corroborative vision, or even that she had been supernaturally enlightened. Had she not the message the angel delivered to Zacharias? and was not that enough? Her son was to be the Christ's forerunner, going, as the angel said, before the face of "the Lord." Three times had the angel designated the Coming One as "the Lord," and this was the word she had carried with her into her seclusion. What it meant she did not fully understand; but she knew this, that it was He of whom Moses and the prophets had written, the Shiloh, the Wonderful; and as she put together the detached Scriptures, adding, doubtless, some guesses of her own, the Christ grew as a conception of her mind and the desire of her heart into such colossal proportions that even her own offspring was dwarfed in comparison, and the thoughts of her own maternity became, in the rush of greater thoughts, only as the stray eddies of the stream. That such was the drift of her thoughts during the five quiet months is evident; for now, taught of the Holy Ghost that her kinswoman is to be the mother of the expected One, she greets the unborn Christ with her lesser *Benedictus*. Like the old painters, she puts her aureole of song around the mother's head, but it is easy to see that the mother's honours are but the far-off reflections from the Child. Is Mary blessed among women? it is not because of any wealth of native grace, but because of the fruit of her womb. Does Elisabeth throw herself right back in the shade, asking almost abjectly, "Whence is this to me?" it is because, like the centurion, she feels herself unworthy that even the unborn "Lord" should come under her roof. And

so, while this song is really an ode to the Virgin, it is virtually Elisabeth's salute of the Christ who is to be, a salute in which her own offspring takes part, for she speaks of his "leaping" in her womb, as if he were a participant in her joy, interpreting its movements as a sort of "Hail, Master!" The canticle thus becomes invested with a higher significance. Its words say much, but suggest more. It carries our thought out from the seen to the unseen, from the mother to the Holy Child, and Elisabeth's song thus becomes the earliest "Hosannah to the Son of David," the first prelude to the unceasing anthems that are to follow.

It will be observed that in the last line the song drops out of the first and the second personals into the third. It is no longer the frequent "thy," "thou," "my," but "she:" "Happy is she that believed." Why is this change? Why does she not end as she began—"Happy art thou who hast believed"? Simply because she is no longer speaking of Mary alone. She puts herself as well within this beatitude, and at the same time states a general law, how faith ripens into a harvest of blessedness. The last line thus becomes the "Amen" of the song. It reaches up among the eternal "Verilies," and sets them ringing. It speaks of the Divine faithfulness, out of which and within which human faith grows as an acorn within its cup. And who could have better right to sing of the blessedness of faith, and to introduce this New Testament grace—not unknown in the Old Testament, but unnamed—as she who was herself such an exemplification of her theme? How calmly her own heart reposed on the Divine word! How before her far-seeing and foreseeing vision valleys were exalted, mountains and hills made low, that the way of the Lord might appear!

Elisabeth sees the unseen Christ, lays before Him the tribute of her song, the treasures of her affection and devotion; even before the Magi had saluted the Child-King, Elisabeth's heart had gone out to meet Him with her hosannas, and her lips had greeted Him "My Lord." Elisabeth is thus the first singer of the New Dispensation; and though her song is more a bud of poetry than the ripe, blossomed flower, enfolding rather than unfolding its hidden beauties, it pours out a fragrance sweeter than spikenard on the feet of the Coming One, while it throws around Him the purple of new royalties.

Turning now to the song of Mary, our *Magnificat*, we come to poetry of a higher order. Elisabeth's introit was evidently spoken under intense feeling; it was the music of the storm; for "she lifted up her voice with a loud cry." Mary's song, on the other hand, is calm, the hymn of the "quiet resting-place." There is no unnatural excitement now, no inward perturbation, half mental and half physical. Mary was perfectly self-possessed, as if the spell of some Divine "peace" were upon her soul; and as Elisabeth's "loud cry" ceased, Mary "said"—so it reads—her response. But if the voice was lower, the thought was higher, more majestic in its sweep. Elisabeth's song was on the lower heights. "The mother of my Lord," this was its starting-place, and the centre around which its circles were described; and though its wings beat now and again against the infinities, it does not attempt to explore them, but returns timidly to its nest. But Elisabeth's loftiest reach is Mary's starting-point; her song begins where the song of Elisabeth ends. Striking her key-note in the first line, "The Lord," this is her one thought, the Alpha and Omega of her psalm.

We call it the *Magnificat;* it is a *Te Deum*, full of suggested doxologies. Beginning with the personal, as she is almost compelled to do by the intense personality of Elizabeth's song, Mary hastes to gather up the eulogies bestowed upon herself, and to bear them forward to Him who merits all praise, as He is the Source of all blessing. Her soul "magnifies the Lord," not that she, by any weak words of hers, can add to His greatness, which is infinite, but even she may give the Lord a wider place within her thoughts and heart; and whoever is silent, her song shall make "the voice of His praise to be heard." Her spirit "hath rejoiced in God her Saviour," and why? Has He not looked down on her low estate, and done great things for her? "The bondmaid of the Lord," as she a second time calls herself, glorying in her bonds, such is her promotion and exaltation that all generations shall call her blessed. Then, with a beautiful effacement of self, which henceforth is not even to be a mote playing in the sunshine, she sings of Jehovah—His holiness, His might, His mercy, His faithfulness.

Mary's song, both in its tone and language, belongs to the Old Dispensation. Thoroughly Hebraic, and all inlaid with Old Testament quotations, it is the swan-song of Hebraism. There is not a single phrase, perhaps not a single word, that bears a distinctive Christian stamp; for the "Saviour" of the first strophe is the "Saviour" of the Old Testament, and not of the New, with a national rather than an evangelical meaning. The heart of the singer is turned to the past rather than to the future. Indeed, with the solitary exception, how all generations shall call her blessed, there is no passing glimpse into the future. Instead of speaking of the Expected One, and blessing "the fruit

of her womb," her song does not even mention Him. She tells how the Lord hath done great things for her, but what those "great things" are she does not say; she might, as far as her own song tells us, be simply a later Miriam, singing of some family or personal deliverance, a salvation which was one of a thousand. A true daughter of Israel, she dwells among her own people, and her very broadest vision sees in her offspring no world-wide blessing, only a Deliverer for Israel, His servant. Does she speak of mercy? it is not that wider mercy that like a sea laves every shore, bearing on its still bosom a redeemed humanity; it is the narrower mercy "toward Abraham and his seed for ever." Mary recognizes the unity of the Godhead, but she does not recognize the unity, the brotherhood of man. Her thought goes back to "our fathers," but there it halts; the shrunken sinew of Hebrew thought could not cross the prior centuries, to find the world's common father in Paradise. But in saying this we do not depreciate Mary's song. It is, and ever will be, the *Magnificat*, great in its theme, and great in its conception. Following the flight of Hannah's song, and making use of its wings at times, it soars far above, and sweeps far beyond its original. Not even David sings of Jehovah in more exalted strains. The holiness of God, the might supreme above all powers, the faithfulness that cannot forget, and that never fails to fulfil, the Divine choice and exaltation of the lowly—these four chief chords of the Hebrew Psalter Mary strikes with a touch that is sweet as it is clear.

Mary sang of God; she did not sing of the Christ. Indeed, how could she? The Christ to be was part of her own life, part of herself; how could she sing His praise without an appearance of egotism and self-gratu-

lation? There are times when silence is more eloquent than speech; and Mary's silence about the Christ was but the silence of the winged cherubim, as they bend over the ark, beholding and feeling a mystery they can neither know nor tell. It was the hush inspired by a near and glorious presence. And so the *Magnificat*, while it tells us nothing of the Christ, swings our thoughts around towards Him, sets us listening for His advent; and Mary's silence is but the setting for the Incarnate WORD.

The song of Zacharias follows that of Mary, not only in the order of time, but also in its sequence of thought. It forms a natural postlude to the *Magnificat*, while both are but different parts of one song, this earliest "Messiah." It is something remarkable that our first three Christian hymns should have their birth in the same nameless city of Judah, in the same house, and probably in the same chamber; for the room, which now is filled with the priest's relatives, and where Zacharias breaks the long silence with his prophetic *Benedictus*, is doubtless the same room where Elisabeth chanted her greeting, and Mary sang her *Magnificat*. The song of Mary circled about the throne of Jehovah, nor could she leave that throne, even to tell the great things the Lord had done for her. Zacharias, coming down from his mount of vision and of silence, gives us a wider outlook into the Divine purpose. He sings of the "salvation" of the Lord; and salvation, as it is the key-note of the heavenly song, is the key-note of the *Benedictus*. Does he bless the Lord, the God of Israel? it is because He has "visited" (or looked upon) "His people, and wrought redemption for" them; it is because He has provided an abundant salvation, or a "horn of salvation," as

he calls it. Has God remembered His covenant, "the oath He sware unto Abraham"? has He "shown mercy towards their fathers"? that mercy and faithfulness are seen in this wonderful salvation—a salvation "from their enemies," and "from the hand of all that hate" them. Is his child to be "the prophet of the Most High," going "before the face of the Lord," and making "ready His ways"? it is that he may "give knowledge of" this "salvation," in "the remission of sins." Then the psalm ends, falling back on its key-note; for who are they who "sit in darkness and the shadow of death," but a people lost? And who is the Day-spring who visits them from on high, who shines upon their darkness, turning it into day, and guiding their lost feet into the way of peace, but the Redeemer, the Saviour, whose name is "Wonderful"? And so the *Benedictus*, while retaining the form and the very language of the Old, breathes the spirit of the New Dispensation. It is a fragrant breeze, blowing off from the shores of a new, and now near world, a world already seen and possessed by Zacharias in the anticipations of faith. The Saviour whose advent the inspired priest proclaims is no mere national deliverer, driving back those eagles of Rome, and rebuilding the throne of his father David. He might be all that—for even prophetic vision had not sweep of the whole horizon; it only saw the little segment of the circle that was Divinely illumined—but to Zacharias He was more, a great deal more. He was a Redeemer as well as Deliverer; and a "redemption"—for it was a Temple word—meant a price laid down, something given. The salvation of which Zacharias speaks is not simply a deliverance from our political enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us. It was a salvation

higher, broader, deeper than that, a "salvation" that reached to the profound depths of the human soul, and that sounded its jubilee there, in the remission of sin and deliverance from sin. Sin was the enemy to be vanquished and destroyed, and the shadow of death was but the shadow of sin. And Zacharias sings of this great redemption that leads to salvation, while the salvation leads into the Divine peace, to "holiness and righteousness," and a service that is "without fear."

The ark of Israel was borne by four of the sons of Kohath; and here this ark of song and prophecy is borne of four sweet singers, the sexes dividing the honours equally. We have listened to the songs of three, and have seen how they follow each other in a regular, rhythmic succession, the thought moving forward and outward in ever-widening circles. Where is the fourth? and what is the burden of his song? It is heard within the precincts of the Temple, as the parents bring the Child Jesus, to introduce Him to the visible sanctities of religion, and to consecrate Him to the Lord. It is the *Nunc Dimittis* of the aged Simeon. He too sings of "salvation," "Thy salvation" as he calls it. It is the "consolation of Israel" he has looked for so ardently and so long, and which the Holy Ghost had assured him he should behold before his promotion to the higher temple. But the vision of Simeon was wider than that of Zacharias, as that in turn was wider and clearer than the vision of Mary. Zacharias saw the spiritual nature of this near salvation, and he described it in words singularly deep and accurate; but its breadth he did not seem to realize. The theocracy was the atmosphere in which he lived and moved; and even his vision was theocratic, and

so somewhat narrow. His *Benedictus* was for the "God of Israel," and the "redemption" he sang was "for His people." The "horn of salvation" is "for us;" and all through his psalm these first personal pronouns are frequent and emphatic, as if he would still insulate this favoured people, and give them a monopoly even of "redemption." The aged Simeon, however, stands on a higher Pisgah. His is the nearer and the clearer vision. Standing as he does in the Court of the Gentiles, and holding in his arms the Infant Christ, "the Lord's Christ," he sees in Him a Saviour for humanity, "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." Still, as ever, "the glory of God's people Israel," but likewise "a light for the unveiling of the Gentiles." Like the sentry who keeps watch through the night till the sunrise, Simeon has been watching and longing for the Day-spring from on high, reading from the stars of promise the wearing of the night, and with the music of fond hopes "keeping his heart awake till dawn of morn." Now at length the consummation, which is the consolation, comes. Simeon sees in the Child Jesus the world's hope and Light, a salvation "prepared before the face of all people." And seeing this, he sees all he desires. Earth can give no brighter vision, no deeper joy, and all his request is—

> "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart, O Lord,
> According to Thy word, in peace;
> For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

And so the four psalms of the Gospels form in reality but one song, the notes rising higher and still higher, until they reach the very pinnacle of the new temple—God's purpose and plan of redemption; that

temple whose altar is a cross, and whose Victim is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;" that temple where courts and dividing-lines all disappear; where the Holiest of all lies open to a redeemed humanity, and Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, old and young, are alike "kings and priests unto God." And so the Gospel psalms throw back, as it were, in a thousand echoes, the *Glorias* of the Advent angels, as they sing—

> "Glory to God in the highest,
> And on earth peace."

And what is this but earth's prelude or rehearsal for the heavenly song, as all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, falling down before the Lamb in the midst of the throne, sing, "Salvation unto our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the LAMB"?

CHAPTER IV.

THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

THE Beautiful Gate of the Jewish Temple opened into the "Court of the Women"—so named from the fact that they were not allowed any nearer approach towards the Holy Place. And as we open the gate of the third Gospel we enter the Court of the Women; for more than any other Evangelist, St. Luke records their loving and varied ministries. Perhaps this is owing to his profession, which naturally would bring him into more frequent contact with feminine life. Or perhaps it is a little Philippian colour thrown into his Gospel; for we must not forget that St. Luke had been left by the Apostle Paul at Philippi, to superintend the Church that had been cradled in the prayers of the "river-side" women. It may be a tinge of Lydia's purple; or to speak more broadly and more literally, it may be the subtle, unconscious influences of that Philippian circle that have given a certain feminity to our third Gospel. St. Luke alone gives us the psalms of the three women, Anna, Elisabeth, and Mary; he alone gives us the names of Susanna and Joanna, who ministered to Christ of their substance; he alone gives us that Galilean idyll, where the nameless "woman" bathes His feet with tears, and at the same time rains a hot rebuke on the cold civilities of the Pharisee,

Simon; he alone tells of the widow of Zarephath, who welcomed and saved a prophet men were seeking to slay; he alone tells us of the widow of Nain, of the woman bent with infirmity, and of the woman grieving over her lost piece of silver. And as St. Luke opens his Gospel with woman's tribute of song, so in his last chapter he paints for us that group of women, constant amid man's inconstancies, coming ere the break of day, to wrap around the body of the dead Christ the precious and fragrant offering of devotion. So, in this Paradise Restored, do Eve's daughters roll back the reproach of their mother. But ever first and foremost among the women of the Gospels we must place the Virgin Mother, whose character and position in the Gospel story we are now to consider.

We need not stay to discuss the question—perhaps we ought not to stay even to give it a passing notice—whether there might have been an Incarnation even had there been no sin. It is not an impossible, it is not an improbable supposition, that the Christ would have come into the world even had man kept his first estate of innocence and bliss. But then it would have been the "Christ" simply, and not Jesus Christ. He would have come into the world, not as its Redeemer, but as the Son and Heir, laying tribute on all its harvests; He would have come as the flower and crown of a perfected humanity, to show the possibilities of that humanity, its absolute perfections. But leaving the "might-have-beens," in whose tenuous spaces there is room for the nebulæ of fancies and of guesses without number, let us narrow our vision within the horizon of the real, the actual.

Given the necessity for an Incarnation, there are two modes in which that Incarnation may be brought about

—by creation, or by birth. The first Adam came into the world by the creative act of God. Without the intervention of second causes, or any waiting for the slow lapse of time, God spake, and it was done. Will Scripture repeat itself here, in the new Genesis? and will the second Adam, coming into the world to repair the ruin wrought by the first, come as did the first? We can easily conceive such an advent to be possible; and if we regarded simply the analogies of the case, we might even suppose it to be probable. But how different a Christ it would have been! He might still have been bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh; He might have spoken the same truths, in the same speech and tone; but He must have lived apart from the world. It would not be our humanity that He wore; it would only be its shadow, its semblance, playing before our minds like an illusion. No, the Messiah must not be simply a second Adam; He must be the Son of Man, and He cannot become Humanity's Son except by a human birth. Any other advent, even though it had satisfied the claims of reason, would have failed to satisfy those deeper voices of the heart. And so, on the first pages of Scripture, before Eden's gate is shut and locked by bolts of flame, Heaven signifies its intention and decision. The coming One, who shall bruise the serpent's head, shall be the woman's "Seed" —the Son of woman, that so He may become more truly the Son of Man; while later a strange expression finds its way into the sacred prophecy, how "a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." It is true these words primarily might have a local meaning and fulfilment—though what that narrower meaning was no one can tell with any approach to certainty; but looking at the singularity of the expression, and coupling

it with the story of the Advent, we can but see in it a deeper meaning and a wider purpose. Evidently it was that the virgin-conception might strike upon the world's ear and become a familiar thought, and that it might throw backwards across the pages of the Old Testament the shadow of the Virgin Mother. We have already seen how the thought of a Messianic motherhood had dropped deep within the heart of the Hebrew people, awaking hopes, and prayers, and all sorts of beautiful dreams—dreams, alas! that vanished with the years, and hopes that blossomed but to fade. But now the hour is coming, that supreme hour for which the centuries have all been waiting. The forerunner is already announced, and in twelve short weeks he who loved to call himself a Voice will break the strange silence of that Judæan home. Whence will come his Lord, who shall be "greater than he"? Where shall we find the Mother-elect, for whom such honours have been reserved—honours such as no mortal has ever yet borne, and as none will ever bear again? St. Luke tells us, "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary" (R.V.). And so the Mother-designate takes her place in this firmament of Scripture, silently and serenely as a morning star, which indeed she is; for she shines in a borrowed splendour, taking her glories all from Him around whom she revolves, from Him who was both her Son and her Sun.

It will be seen in the above verse how particular the Evangelist is in his topographical reference, putting a kind of emphasis upon the name which now appears

for the first time upon the pages of Scripture. When we remember how Nazareth was honoured by the angel visit; how it was, not the chance, but the chosen home of the Christ for thirty years; how it watched and guarded the Divine Infancy, throwing into that life its powerful though unconscious influences, even as the dead soil throws itself forward and upward into each separate flower and farthest leaf; when we remember how it linked its own name with the Name of Jesus, becoming almost a part of it; how it wrote its name upon the cross, then handing it down to the ages as the name and watchword of a sect that should conquer the world, we must admit that Nazareth is by no means "the least among the cities" of Israel. And yet we search in vain through the Old Testament for the name of Nazareth. History, poetry, and prophecy alike pass it by in silence. And so the Hebrew mind, while rightly linking the expected One with Bethlehem, never associated the Christ with Nazareth. Indeed, its moralities had become so questionable and proverbial that while the whole of Galilee was too dry a ground to grow a prophet, Nazareth was thought incapable of producing "any good thing." Was, then, the Nazareth chapter of the Christ-life an afterthought of the Divine Mind, like the marginal reading of an author's proof, put in to fill up a blank or to be a substitute for some erasure? Not so. It had been in the Divine Mind from the beginning; yea, it had been in the authorized text, though men had not read it plainly. It is St. Matthew who first calls our attention to it. Writing, as he does, mainly for Hebrew readers, he is constantly looping up his story with the Old Testament prophecies; and speaking of the return from Egypt, he says they "came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it

might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, that He should be called a Nazarene." We said just now that the name of Nazareth was not found in the Old Testament. But if we do not find the proper name, we find the word which is identical with the name. It is now regarded by competent authorities as proved that the Hebrew name for Nazareth was Netser. Taking now this word in our mind, and turning to Isaiah xi. 1, we read, "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch [Netser] out of his roots shall bear fruit: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him." Here, then, evidently, is the prophetic voice to which St. Matthew refers; and one little word—the name of Nazareth—becomes the golden link binding in one the Prophecies and the Gospels.

Returning to our main subject, it is to this secluded, and somewhat despised city of Nazareth the angel Gabriel is now sent, to announce the approaching birth of Christ. St. Luke, in his nominative way of speaking, says he came "to a Virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the Virgin's name was Mary." It is difficult for us to form an unbiassed estimate of the character before us, as our minds are feeling the inevitable recoil from Roman assumptions. We are confused with the childish prattle of their *Ave Marias;* we are amused at their dogmas of Immaculate Conceptions and Ever Virginities; we are surprised and shocked at their apotheosis of the Virgin, as they lift her to a throne practically higher than that of her Son, worshipped in devouter homage, supplicated with more earnest and more frequent prayers, and at the blasphemies of their Mariolatry, which make her supreme on earth and supreme in heaven.

This undue exaltation of the Virgin Mother, which becomes an adoration pure and simple, sends our Protestant thought with a violent swing to the extreme of the other side, considerably over the line of the "golden mean." And so we find it hard to dissociate in our minds the Virgin Mother from these Marian assumptions and divinations; for which, however, she herself is in no way responsible, and against which she would be the first to protest. Seen only through these Romish haloes, and atmospheres highly incensed, her very name has been distorted, and her features, spoiled of all grace and sweet serenity, have ceased to be attractive. But this is not just. If Rome weights one scale with crowns, and sceptres, and piles of imperial purple, we need not load down the other with our prejudices, satires, and negations. Two wrongs will not make a right. It is neither on the crest of the wave, nor yet in the deep trough of the billows, that we shall find the mean sea-level, from which we can measure all heights, running out our lines even among the stars. Can we not find that mean sea-level now, hushing alike the voices of adulation and of depreciation? Laying aside the traditions of antiquity and the legends of scribulous monks, laying aside, too, the coloured glasses of our prejudice, with which we have been wont to protect our eyes from the glare of Roman suns, may we not get a true portraiture of the Virgin Mother, in all the native naturalness of Scripture? We think we can.

She comes upon us silently and suddenly, emerging from an obscurity whose secrets we cannot read. No mention is made of her parents; tradition only has supplied us with their names—Joachim and Anna. But whether Joachim or not, it is certain that her father was of the tribe of Judah, and of the house of David.

Having this fact to guide us, and also another fact, that Mary was closely related to Elisabeth—though not necessarily her cousin—who was of the tribe of Levi and a daughter of Aaron, then it becomes probable, at least, that the unnamed mother of the Virgin was of the tribe of Levi, and so the connecting-link between the houses of Levi and Judah—a probability which receives an indirect but strong confirmation in the fact that Nazareth was intimately connected with Jerusalem and the Temple, one of the cities selected as a residence of the priests. May we not, then, suppose that this unnamed mother of the Virgin was a daughter of one of the priests then residing at Nazareth, and that Mary's relatives on the mother's side—some of them—were also priests, going up at stated times to Jerusalem, to perform their "course" of Temple services? It is certainly a most natural supposition, and one, too, that will help to remove some subsequent difficulties in the story; as, for instance, the journey of Mary to Judæa. Some honest minds have stumbled at that long journey of a hundred miles, while others have grown pathetic in their descriptions of that lonely pilgrimage of the Galilean Virgin. But it is neither necessary nor likely that Mary should take the journey alone. Her connection with the priesthood, if our supposition be correct, would find her an escort, even among her own relatives, as least as far as Jerusalem; and since the priestly courses were half-yearly in their service, it would be just the time the "course of Abijah," in which Zacharias served, would be returning once again to their Judæan homes. It is only a supposition, it is true, but it is a supposition that is extremely natural and more than probable; and if we look through it, taking "Levi" and "Judah" as our binocular lenses, it carries a

thread of light through otherwise dark places; while throwing our sight forward, it brings distant Nazareth in line with Jerusalem and the "hill-country of Judæa."

Betrothed to Joseph, who was of the royal line, and as some think, the legal heir to David's throne, Mary was probably not more than twenty years of age. Whether an orphan or not we cannot tell, though the silence of Scripture would almost lead us to suppose that she was. Papias, however, who was a disciple of St. John, states that she had two sisters—Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Salome the wife of Zebedee. If this be so—and there is no reason why we should discredit the statement—then Mary the Virgin Mother would probably be the eldest of the three sisters, the house-mother in the Nazareth home. Where it was that the angel appeared to her we cannot tell. Tradition, with one of its random guesses, has fixed the spot in the suburbs, beside the fountain. But there is something incongruous and absurd in the selection of such a place for an angelic appearance—the public resort and lounge, where the clatter of feminine gossip was about as constant as the flow and sparkle of its waters. Indeed, the very form of the participle disposes of that tradition, for we read, "He came in unto her," implying that it was within her holy place of home the angel found her. Nor is there any need to suppose, as some do, that it was in her quiet chamber of devotion, where she was observing the stated hours of prayer. Celestials do not draw that broad line of distinction between so-called secular and sacred duties. To them "work" is but another form of "worship," and all duties to them are sacred, even when they lie among life's temporal, and so-called secular things. Indeed, Heaven reserves its highest visions, not for those quiet moments of still

devotion, but for the hours of busy toil, when mind and body are given to the "trivial rounds" and the "common tasks" of every-day life. Moses is at his shepherding when the bush calls him aside, with its tongues of fire; Gideon is threshing out his wheat when God's angel greets him and summons him to the higher task; and Zacharias is performing the routine service of his priestly office when Gabriel salutes him with the first voice of a New Dispensation. And so all the analogies would lead us to suppose that the Virgin was quietly engaged in her domestic duties, offering the sacrifice of her daily task, as Zacharias offered his incense of stacte and onycha, when Gabriel addressed her, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee" (R.V.). The Romanists, eager to accord Divine honours to the Virgin Mother as the dispenser of blessing and of grace, interpret the phrase, "Thou that art full of grace." It is, perhaps, not an inapt rendering of the word, and is certainly more euphonious than our marginal reading "much graced;" but when they make the "grace" an inherent, and not a derived grace, their doctrine slants off from all Scripture, and is opposed to all reason. That the word itself gives no countenance to such an enthronement of Mary, is evident, for St. Paul makes use of the same word when speaking of himself and the Ephesian Christians (Eph. i. 6), where we render it "His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." But criticism apart, never before had an angel so addressed a mortal, for even Daniel's "greatly beloved" falls below this Nazareth greeting. When Gabriel came to Zacharias there was not even a "Hail;" it was simply a "Fear not," and then the message; but now he gives to Mary a "Hail" and two beatitudes besides: "Thou art highly favoured;" "the Lord is with

thee." And do these words mean nothing? Are they but a few heavenly courtesies whose only meaning is in their sound? Heaven does not speak thus with random, unmeaning words. Its voices are true, and deep as they are true, never meaning less, but often more than they say. That the angel should so address her is certain proof that the Virgin possessed a peculiar fitness for the Divine honours she was now to receive—honours which had been so long held back, as if in reserve for herself alone. It is only they who look heavenward who see heavenly things. There must be a heart aflame before the bush burns; and when the bush is alight it is only "he who sees takes off his shoes."

The glimpses we get of the Virgin are few and brief; she is soon eclipsed—if we may be allowed that shadowy word—by the greater glories of her Son; but why should she be selected as the mother of the human Christ? why should her life nourish His? why should the thirty years be spent in her daily presence, her face being the first vision of awaking consciousness, as it was in the last earthward look from the cross?—why all this, except that there was a wealth of beauty and of grace about her nature, a certain tinge of heavenliness that made it fitting the Messiah should be born of her rather than of any woman else? As we have seen, the royal and the priestly lines meet in her, and Mary unites in herself all the dignity of the one with the sanctity of the other. With what delicacy and grace she receives the angel's message! "Greatly troubled" at first—not, however, like Zacharias, at the sight of the messenger, but at his message—she soon recovers herself, and "casts in her mind what manner of salutation this might be." This sentence just describes one prominent feature of her character, her

reflective, reasoning mind. Sparing of words, except when under the inspiration of some *Magnificat*, she lived much within herself. She loved the companionship of her own thoughts, finding a certain music in their still monologue. When the shepherds made known the saying of the angel about this child, repeating the angelic song, perhaps, with sundry variations of their own, Mary is neither elated nor astonished. Whatever her feelings—and they must have been profoundly moved—she carefully conceals them. Instead of telling out her own deep secrets, letting herself drift out on the ecstasies of the moment, Mary is silent, serenely quiet, unwilling that even a shadow of herself should dim the brightness of His rising. "She kept," so we read, "all these sayings, pondering them in her heart;" or putting them together, as the Greek word means, and so forming, as in a mental mosaic, her picture of the Christ who was to be. And so, in later years, we read (ii. 51) how "His mother kept all these saying in her heart," gathering up the fragmentary sentences of the Divine Childhood and Youth, and hiding them, as a treasure peculiarly her own, in the deep, still chambers of her soul. And what those still chambers of her soul were, how heavenly the atmosphere that enswathed them, how hallowed by the Divine Presence, her *Magnificat* will show; for that inspired psalm is but an opened window, letting the music pass without, as it throws the light within, showing us the temple of a quiet, devout, and thoughtful soul.

With what complacency and with what little surprise she received the angel's message! The Incarnation does not come upon her as a new thought, a thought for which her mind cannot possibly find room, and human speech can weave no fitting dress. It disturbs

neither her reason nor her faith. Versed in Scripture as she is, it comes rather as a familiar thought—a heavenly dove, it is true, but gliding down within her mind in a perfect, because a heavenly naturalness. And when the angel announces that the "Son of the Most High," whose name shall be called Jesus, and who shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, shall be born of herself, there is no exclamation of astonishment, no word of incredulity as to whether this can be, but simply a question as to the manner of its accomplishment: "How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man?" The Christ had evidently been conceived in her mind, and cradled in her heart, even before He became a conception of her womb.

And what an absolute self-surrender to the Divine purpose! No sooner has the angel told her that the Holy Ghost shall come upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadow her, than she bows to the Supreme Will in a lowly, reverential acquiescence: "Behold, the handmaid [bondmaid] of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." So do the human and the Divine wills meet and mingle. Heaven touches earth, comes down into it, that earth may evermore touch heaven, and indeed form part of it.

The angel departs, leaving her alone with her great secret; and little by little it dawns upon her, as it could not have done at first, what this secret means for her. A great honour it is, a great joy it will be; but Mary finds, as we all find, the path to heaven's glories lies through suffering; the way into the wealthy place is "through the fire." How can she carry this great secret herself? and yet how can she tell it? Who will believe her report? Will not these Nazarenes laugh at her story of the vision, except that

the matter would be too grave for a smile? It is her own secret yet, but it cannot be a secret long; and then—who can defend her, and ward off the inevitable shame? Where can she find shelter from the venomed shafts that will be hurled from every side—where, save in her consciousness of unsullied purity, and in the "shadow of the Highest"? Was it thoughts like these that now agitated her mind, deciding her to make the hasty visit to Elisabeth? or was it that she might find sympathy and counsel in communion with a kindred soul, one that age had made wise, and grace made beautiful? Probably it was both; but in this journey we will not follow her now, except to see how her faith in God never once wavered. We have already listened to her sweet song; but what a sublime faith it shows, that she can sing in face of this gathering storm, a storm of suspicion and of shame, when Joseph himself will seek to put her away, lest his character should suffer too! But Mary believed, even though she felt and smarted. She endured "as seeing Him who is invisible." Could she not safely leave her character to Him? Would not the Lord avenge His own elect? Would not Divine Wisdom justify her child? Faith and hope said "Yes;" and Mary's soul, like a nightingale, trilled out her *Magnificat* when earth's light was disappearing, and the shadows were falling thick and fast on every side.

It is on her return to Nazareth, after her three months' absence, that the episode occurs narrated by St. Matthew. It is thrown into the story almost by way of parenthesis, but it casts a vivid light on the painful experience through which she was now called to pass. Her prolonged absence, most unusual for one betrothed, was in itself puzzling; but she returns

to find only a scant welcome. She finds herself suspected of shame and sin, "the white flower of her blameless life" dashed and stained with black aspersions. Even Joseph's confidence in her is shaken, so shaken that he must put her away and have the betrothal cancelled. And so the clouds darken about the Virgin; she is left almost alone in the sharp travail of her soul, charged with sin, even when she is preparing for the world a Saviour, and likely, unless Heaven speedily interpose, to become an outcast, if not a martyr, thrown outside the circle of human courtesies and sympathies as a social leper. Like another heir of all the promises, she too is led as a lamb to the slaughter, a victim bound, and all but sacrificed, upon the altar of the public conscience. But Heaven did intervene, even as it stayed the knife of Abraham. An angel appears to Joseph, throwing around the suspected one the mantle of unsullied innocence, and assuring him that her explanation, though passing strange, was truth itself. And so the Lord did avenge His own elect, stilling the babble of unfriendly tongues, restoring to her all the lost confidences, together with a wealth of added hopes and prospective honours.

Not, however, out of Galilee must the Shiloh come, but out of Judah; and not Nazareth, but Bethlehem Ephratah is the designated place of His coming forth who shall be the Governor and Shepherd of "My people Israel." What means, then, this apparent divergence of the Providence from the Prophecy, the whole drift of the one being northward, while the other points steadily to the south? It is only a seeming divergence, the backward flash of the wheel that all the time is moving steadily, swiftly forward. The Prophecy

and the Providence are but the two staves of the ark, moving in different but parallel lines, and bearing between them the Divine purpose. Already the line is laid that links Nazareth with Bethlehem, the line of descent we call lineage; and now we see Providence setting in motion another force, the Imperial Will, which, moving along this line, makes the purpose a realization. Nor was it the Imperial Will only; it was the Imperial Will acting through Jewish prejudices. These two forces, antagonistic, if not opposite, were the centrifugal and centripetal forces that kept the Divine Purpose moving in its appointed round and keeping Divine hours. Had the registration decreed by Cæsar been conducted after the Roman manner, Joseph and Mary would not have been required to go up to Bethlehem; but when, out of deference to Jewish prejudice, the registration was made in the Hebrew mode, this compelled them, both being descendants of David, to go up to their ancestral city. It has been thought by some that Mary possessed some inherited property in Bethlehem; and the narrative would suggest that there were other links that bound them to the city; for evidently they intended to make Bethlehem henceforth their place of residence, and they would have done so had not a Divine monition broken in upon their purpose (Matt. ii. 23).

And so they move southward, obeying the mandate of Cæsar, who now is simply the executor of the higher Will, the Will that moves silently but surely, back of all thrones, principalities, and powers. We will not attempt to gild the gold, by enlarging upon the story of the Nativity, and so robbing it of its sweet simplicity. The toilsome journey; its inhospitable ending; the stable and the manger; the angelic sym-

phonies in the distance; the adoration of the shepherds —all form one sweet idyll, no word of which we can spare; and as the Church chants her *Te Deum* all down the ages this will not be one of its lowest strains:—

> "When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man
> Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb."

And so the Virgin becomes the Virgin Mother, graduating into motherhood amid the acclamations of the sky, and borne on to her exalted honours in the sweep of Imperial decrees.

After the Nativity she sinks back into a second—a far-off second—place, for "the greater glory doth dim the less;" and twice only does her voice break the silence of the thirty years. We hear it first in the Temple, as, in tones tremulous with anxiety and sorrow, she asks, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I sought Thee sorrowing." The whole incident is perplexing, and if we read it superficially, not staying to read between the lines, it certainly places the mother in anything but a favourable light. Let us observe, however, that there was no necessity that the mother should have made this pilgrimage, and evidently she had made it so that she might be near her precious charge. But now she strangely loses sight of Him, and goes even a day's journey without discovering her loss. How is this? Has she suddenly grown careless? or does she lose both herself and her charge in the excitements of the return journey? Thoughtfulness, as we have seen, was a characteristic feature of her life. Hers was "the harvest of the quiet eye," and her thoughts centred not on herself, but on her Divine Son; He was her Alpha and Omega,

her first, her last, her only thought. It is altogether outside the range of possibilities that she now could be so negligent of her maternal duties, and so we are compelled to seek for our explanation elsewhere. May we not find it in this? The parents had left Jerusalem earlier in the day, arranging for the child Jesus to follow with another part of the same company, which, leaving later, would overtake them at their first camp. But Jesus not appearing when the second company starts, they imagine that He has gone on with the first company, and so proceed without Him. This seems the only probable solution of the difficulty; at any rate it makes plain and perfectly natural what else is most obscure and perplexing. Mary's mistake, however—and it was not her fault—opens to us a page in the sealed volume of the Divine Boyhood, letting us hear its solitary voice—"Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?"

We see the mother again at Cana, where she is an invited and honoured guest at the marriage, moving about among the servants with a certain quiet authority, and telling her Divine Son of the breakdown in the hospitalities: "They have no wine." We cannot now go into details, but evidently there was no distancing reserve between the mother and her Son. She goes to Him naturally; she speaks to Him freely and frankly, as any widow would speak to the son on whom she leaned. Nay, she seems to know, as by a sort of intuition, of the superhuman powers that are lying dormant in that quiet Son of hers, and she so correctly reads the horoscope of Heaven as to expect this will be the hour and the place of their manifestation. Perhaps her mind did not grasp the true Divinity of her Son—indeed, it could not have done so before

the Resurrection—but that He is the Messiah she has no doubt, and so, strong in her confidence, she says to the servants, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." And her faith must have been great indeed, when it required a "whatsoever" to measure it. Some have thought they could detect a tinge of impatience and a tone of rebuke in the reply of Jesus; and doubtless there is a little sharpness in our English rendering of it. It does sound to our ears somewhat unfilial and harsh. But to the Greeks the address "Woman" was both courteous and respectful, and Jesus Himself uses it in that last tender salute from the cross. Certainly, she did not take it as a rebuke, for one harsh word, like the touch on the sensitive plant, would have thrown her back into silence; whereas she goes off directly to the servants with her "whatsoever."

We get one more brief glimpse of her at Capernaum, as she and her other sons come out to Jesus to urge Him to desist from His long speaking. It is but a simple narrative, but it serves to throw a side-light on that home-life now removed to Capernaum. It shows us the thoughtful, loving mother, as, forgetful of herself and full of solicitude for Him, who, she fears, will tax Himself beyond His strength, she comes out to persuade Him home. But what is the meaning of that strange answer, and the significant gesture? "Mother," "brethren"? It is as if Jesus did not understand the words. They are something He has now outgrown, something He must now lay aside, as He gives Himself to the world at large. As there comes a time in the life of each when the mother is forsaken—left, that he may follow a higher call, and be himself a man—so Jesus now steps out into a world where Mary's heart, indeed, may still follow, but a world her mind may not

enter. The earthly relation is henceforth to be overshadowed by the heavenly. The Son of Mary grows into the Son of man, belonging now to no special one, but to humanity at large, finding in all, even in us, who do the will of the Father in heaven, a brother, a sister, a mother. Not that Jesus forgets her. Oh, no! Even amid the agonies of the cross He thinks of her; He singles her out among the crowd, bespeaking for her a place—the place He Himself has filled—in the heart of His nearest earthly friend; and amid the prayer for His murderers, and the "ELOI, ELOI" of a terrible forsaking, He says to the Apostle of love, "Behold thy mother," and to her, "Behold thy son."

And so the Virgin Mother takes her place in the focal point of all the histories. Through no choice, no conceit or forwardness of her own, but by the grace of God and by an inherent fitness, she becomes the connecting-link between earth and heaven. And throwing, as she does, her unconscious shadow back within the Paradise Lost, and forward through the Gospels to the Paradise Regained, shall we not "magnify the Lord" with her? shall we not "magnify the Lord" for her, as, with all the generations, we "call her blessed"?

CHAPTER V.

THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS.

LUKE ii. 8-21.

THE Gospel of St. Mark omits entirely the Nativity, passing at once to the words and miracles of His public ministry. St. John, too, dismisses the Advent and the earlier years of the Divine Life with one solitary phrase, how the Word, which in the beginning was with God and was God, "became flesh and dwelt among us" (i. 14). St. Luke, however, whose Gospel is the Gospel of the Humanity, lingers reverently over the Nativity, throwing a variety of side-lights upon the cradle of the Holy Child. Already has he shown how the Roman State prepared the cradle of the Infancy, and how Cæsar Augustus unconsciously wrought out the purpose of God, the breath of his imperial decree being but part of a higher inspiration; and now he proceeds to show how the shepherds of Judæa bring the greetings of the Hebrew world, the wave-sheaf of the ripening harvests of homage which yet will be laid, by Jew and Gentile alike, at the feet of Him who was Son of David and Son of man.

It is generally supposed that these anonymous shepherds were residents of Bethlehem, and tradition has fixed the exact spot where they were favoured with this Advent Apocalypse, about a thousand paces from

the modern village. It is a historic fact that there was a tower near that site, called Eder, or "the Tower of the Flock," around which were pastured the flocks destined for the Temple sacrifice; but the topography of ver. 8 is purposely vague. The expression "in that same country," written by one who both in years and in distance was far removed from the events recorded, would describe any circle within the radius of a few miles from Bethlehem as its centre, and the very vagueness of the expression seems to push back the scene of the Advent music to a farther distance than a thousand paces. And this view is confirmed by the language of the shepherds themselves, who, when the vision has faded, say one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass;" for they scarcely would have needed, or used, the adverbial "even" were they keeping their flocks so close up to the walls of the city. We may therefore infer, with some amount of probability, that whether the shepherds were residents of Bethlehem or not, when they kept watch over their flocks, it was not on the traditional site, but farther away over the hills. Indeed, it is difficult, and very often impossible, for us to fix the precise locality of these sacred scenes, these bright points of intersection, where Heaven's glories flash out against the dull carbon-points of earth; and the voices of tradition are at best but doubtful guesses. It would almost seem as if God Himself had wiped out these memories, hiding them away, as He hid the sepulchre of Moses, lest the world should pay them too great a homage, and lest we might think that one place lay nearer to heaven than another, when all places are equally distant, or rather equally near. It is enough to know that somewhere on these lonely hills

came the vision of the angels, perhaps on the very spot where David was minding his sheep when Heaven summoned him to a higher task, passing him up among the kings.

While the shepherds were "watching the watches of the night over their flock," as the Evangelist expresses it, referring to the pastoral custom of dividing the night into watches, and keeping watch by turns, suddenly "an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." When the angel appeared to Zacharias, and when Gabriel brought to Mary her evangel, we do not read of any supernatural portent, any celestial glory, attending them. Possibly because their appearances were in the broad daylight, when the glory would be masked, invisible; but now, in the dead of night, the angelic form is bright and luminous, throwing all around them a sort of heavenly halo, in which even the lustrous Syrian stars grow dim. Dazzled by the sudden burst of glory, the shepherds were awed by the vision, and stricken with a great fear, until the angel, borrowing the tones and accents of their own speech, addressed to them his message, the message he had been commissioned to bring: "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." And then he gave them a sign by which they might recognize the Saviour Lord: "Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger."

From the indefinite wording of the narrative we should infer that the angel who brought the message to the shepherds was not Gabriel, who had before brought the good tidings to Mary. But whether or not the

messenger was the same, the two messages are almost identical in structure and in thought, the only difference being the personal element of the equation, and the shifting of the time from the future to the present tense. Both strike the same key-note, the "Fear not" with which they seek to still the vibrations of the heart, that the Virgin and the shepherds may not have their vision blurred and tremulous through the agitation of the mind. Both make mention of the name of David, which name was the key-word which unlocked all Messianic hopes. Both speak of the Child as a Saviour—though Gabriel wraps up the title within the name, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus;" for, as St. Matthew explains it, "it is He that shall save His people from their sins." Both, too, speak of Him as the Messiah; for when the angel now calls Him the "Christ" it was the same "Anointed" one who, as Gabriel had said, "should reign over the house of Jacob for ever;" while in the last august title now given by the angel, "Lord," we may recognize the higher Divinity—that He is, in some unique, and to us incomprehensible sense, "the Son of the Most High" (i. 32). Such, then, is the triple crown the angel now bears to the cradle of the Holy Child. What He will be to the world is still but a prophecy; but as He, the Firstborn, is now brought into the world, God commands all the angels to worship Him (Heb. i. 6); and with united voice—though the antiphon sings back over a nine months' silence—they salute the Child of Bethlehem as Saviour, Messiah, Lord. The one title sets up His throne facing the lower world, commanding the powers of darkness, and looking at the moral conditions of men; the second throws the shadow of His throne over the political relations of men, making it dominate all thrones; while the third title sets up His throne facing the

heavens themselves, vesting Him with a supreme, a Divine authority.

No sooner was the message ended than suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying—

> "Glory to God in the highest,
> And on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased."

The Revised Version lacks the rhythmic qualities of the Authorized Version; and the wordy clause "among men in whom He is well pleased" seems but a poor substitute for the terse and clear "good-will toward men," which is an expression easy of utterance, and which seemed to have earned a prescriptive right to a place in our Advent music. The revised rendering, however, is certainly more in accord with the grammatical construction of the original, whose idiomatic form can scarcely be put into English, except in a way somewhat circuitous and involved. In both expressions the underlying thought is the same, representing man as the object of the Divine good-pleasure, that Divine "benevolence"—using the word in its etymological sense—which enfolds, in the germ, the Divine favour, compassion, mercy, and love. There is thus a triple parallelism running through the song, the "Glory to God in the highest" finding its corresponding terms in the "peace among (or to) men in whom He is well pleased on earth;" while altogether it forms one complete circle of praise, the "good-pleasure to man," the "peace on earth," the "glory to God" marking off its three segments. And so the song harmonizes with the message; indeed, it is that message in an altered shape; no longer walking in common prosaic ways, but winged now, it moves in its higher circles with measured beat,

leaving a path from the cradle of the Infancy to the highest heavens all strewn with *Glorias*. And what is the triplicity of the song but another rendering of the three august titles of the message—Saviour, Messiah, Lord? the "Saviour" being the expression of the Divine good-pleasure; the "Messiah" telling of His reign upon earth who is Himself the Prince of peace; while the "Lord," which, as we have seen, corresponds with "the Son of the Most High," leads us up directly to the "heavenlies," to Him who commands and who deserves all doxologies.

But is this song only a song in some far-distant sky—a sweet memory indeed, but no experience? Is it not rather the original from which copies may be struck for our individual lives? There is for each of us an advent, if we will accept it; for what is regeneration but the beginning of the Divine life within our life, the advent of the Christ Himself? And let but that supreme hour come to us when place and room are made for Him who is at once the expression of the Divine favour and the incarnation of the Divine love, and the new era dawns, the reign of peace, the "peace *of* God," because the "peace *with* God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Then will the heart throw off its *Glorias*, not in one burst of song, which subsides quickly into silence, but in one perpetual anthem, which ever becomes more loud and sweet as the day of its perfected redemption draweth nigh; for when the Divine displeasure is turned away, and a Divine peace or comfort takes its place, who can but say, "O Lord, I will praise Thee"?

Directly the angel-song had ceased, and the singers had disappeared in the deep silence whence they came, the shepherds, gathering up their scattered thoughts, said one to another (as if their hearts were speaking all

at once and all in unison), "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass which the Lord hath made known unto us." The response was immediate. They do not shut out this heavenly truth by doubt and vain questioning; they do not keep it at a distance from them, as if it only indirectly and distantly concerned themselves, but yield themselves up to it entirely; and as they go hastily to Bethlehem, in the quick step and in the rapid beating of their heart, we can trace the vibrations of the angel-song. And why is this? Why is it that the message does not come upon them as a surprise? Why are these men ready with such a perfect acquiescence, their hearts leaping forward to meet and embrace this Gospel of the angels? We shall probably find our answer in the character of the men themselves. They pass into history unnamed; and after playing their brief part, they disappear, lost in the incense-cloud of their own praises. But evidently these shepherds were no mean, no common men. They were Hebrews, possibly of the royal line; at any rate they were Davids in their loftiness of thought, of hope and aspiration. They were devout, God-fearing men. Like their father Jacob, they too were citizens of two worlds; they could lead their flocks into green pastures, and mend the fold; or they could turn aside from flock and fold to wrestle with God's angels, and prevail. Heaven's revelations come to noble minds, as the loftiest peaks are always the first to hail the dawn. And can we suppose that Heaven would so honour them, lighting up the sky with an aureole of glory for their sole benefit, sending this multitude to sing to them a sweet chorale, if the men themselves had nothing heavenly about them, if their selfish, sordid mind could soar no

higher than their flocks, and have no wider range than the markets for their wool?

> "Let but a flute
> Play 'neath the fine-mixed metal;
> Then shall the huge bell tremble, then the mass
> With myriad waves concurrent shall respond
> In low, soft unison."

But there must be the music hidden within, or there is no unison. And we may be sure of this, that the angel-song had passed by them as a cold night-wind, had not their hearts been tuned up by intense desire, until they struck responsive to the angel-voice. Though they knew it not, they had led their flock to the mount of God; and up the steps of sacred hopes and lofty aspirations they had climbed, until their lives had got within the circle of heavenly harmonies, and they were worthy to be the first apostles of the New Dispensation.

In our earthly modes of thinking we push the sacred and the secular far apart, as if they were two different worlds, or, at any rate, as opposite hemispheres of the same world, with but few points of contact between them. It is not so. The secular is the sacred on its under, its earthward side. It is a part of that great whole we call duty, and in our earthly callings, if they are but pure and honest, we may hear the echoes of a heavenly call. The temple of Worship and the temple of Work are not separated by indefinable spaces; they are contiguous, leaning upon each other, while they both front the same Divine purpose. Nor can it be simply a coincidence that Heaven's revelations should nearly always come to man in the moments of earthly toil, rather than in the hours of leisure or of so-called worship. It was from his shepherding the burning

bush beckoned Moses aside; while Heaven's messenger found Gideon on the threshing-floor, and Elisha in the furrow. In the New Testament, too, in all the cases whose circumstances are recorded, the Divine call reached the disciples when engaged in their every-day task, sitting at the receipt of custom, and casting or mending their nets. The fact is significant. In the estimate of Heaven, instead of a discount being put upon the common tasks of life, those tasks are dignified and ennobled. They look towards heaven, and if the heart be only set in that direction they lead too up towards heaven. Our weeks are not unlike the sheet of Peter's vision; we take care to tie up the two ends, attaching them to heaven, and then we leave what we call the "week-days" bulging down earthward in purely secular fashion. But would not our weeks, and our whole life, swing on a higher and holier level, could we but recognize the fact that all days are the Lord's days, and did we but attach each day and each deed to heaven? Such is the truest, noblest life, that takes the "trivial rounds" as a part of its sacred duties, doing them all as unto the Lord. So, as we sanctify life's common things, they cease to be common, and the earthly becomes less earthly as we learn to see more of heaven in it. In the weaving of our life some of its threads stretch earthward, and some heavenward; but they cross and interlace, and together they form the warp and woof of one fabric, which should be, like the garment of the Master, without seam, woven from the top throughout. Happy is that life which, keeping an open eye over the flock, keeps too a heart open towards heaven, ready to listen to the angelic music, and ready to transfer its rhythm to their own hastening feet or their praising lips.

Our Evangelist tells us that they "came in haste" in search of the young Child, and we may almost detect that haste in the very accents of their speech. It is, "Let us now go across even to Bethlehem," allowing the prefix its proper meaning; as if their eager hearts could not stay to go round by the ordinary road, but like bees scenting a field of clover, they too must make their cross-country way to Bethlehem. Though the angel had not given explicit directions, the city of David was not so large but that they could easily discover the object of their search—the Child, as had been told them, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manager. It has been thought by some that the "inn" is a mistranslation, and that it really was the "guest-chamber" of some friend. It is true the word is rendered "guest-chamber" on the other two occasions of its use (Mark xiv. 14; Luke xxii. 11), but it also signified a public guest-house, as well as a private guest-chamber; and such evidently is its meaning here, for private hospitality, even had its "guest-chamber" been preoccupied, would certainly, under the circumstances, have offered something more human than a stable. That would not have been its only alternative.

It is an interesting coincidence, and one serving to link together the Old and the New Testament, that Jeremiah speaks of a certain *geruth*, or inn, as it may read, "which is by Beth-lehem" (Jer. xli. 17). How it came into the possession of Chimham, who was a Gileadite, we are not told; but we are told that because of the kindness shown to David in his exile by Barzillai, his son Chimham received special marks of the royal favour, and was, in fact, treated almost as an adopted son (1 Kings ii. 7). What is certain is that the *khan* of Bethlehem bore, for successive genera-

tions, the name of Chimham; which fact is in itself evidence that Chimham was its builder, as the well of Jacob retained, through all the changes of inheritance, the name of the patriarch whose thought and gift it was. In all probability, therefore, the "inn" was built by Chimham, on that part of the paternal estate which David inherited; and as the *khans* of the East cling with remarkable tenacity to their original sites, it is probable, to say the least, that the "inn of Chimham" and the inn of Bethlehem, in which there was no room for the two late-comers from Nazareth, were, if not identical, at any rate related structures—so strangely does the cycle of history complete itself, and the Old merge into the New. And so, while Prophecy sings audibly and sweetly of the place which yet shall give birth to the Governor who shall rule over Israel, History puts up her silent hand, and salutes Beth-lehem Ephratah as by no means the least among the cities of Judah.

But not in the inn do the shepherds find the happy parents—the spring-tide of the unusual immigration had completely flooded that, leaving no standing-place for the son and daughter of David—but they find them in a stable, probably in some adjoining cave, the swaddled Child, as the angels had foretold, lying in the manger. Art has lingered reverently and long over this stable scene, hiding with exquisite draperies its baldness and meanness, and lighting up its darkness with wreaths of golden glory; but these splendours are apocryphal, existing only in the mind of the beholder; they are the luminous mist of an adoring love. What the shepherds do find is an extemporized apartment, mean in the extreme; two strangers fresh from Nazareth, both young and both poor; and a

new-born infant asleep in the manger, with a group of sympathizing spectators, who have brought, in the emergency, all kinds of proffered helps. It seems a strange ending for an angel-song, a far drop from the superhuman to the subhuman. Will it shake the faith of these apostle-shepherds? Will it shatter their bright hope? And chagrined that their auroral dream should have so poor a realization, will they return to their flocks with heavy hearts and sad? Not they. They prostrate themselves before the Infant Presence, repeating over and over the heavenly words the angels had spoken unto them concerning the Child, and while Mary announces the name as "Jesus," they salute Him, as the angels had greeted Him before, as Saviour, Messiah, Lord; thus putting on the head of the Child Jesus that triple crown, symbol of a supremacy which knows no limit either in space or time. It was the *Te Deum* of a redeemed humanity, which succeeding years have only made more deep, more full, and which in ever-rising tones will yet grow into the Alleluias of the heavens. Saviour, Messiah, Lord! these titles struck upon Mary's ear not with surprise, for she has grown accustomed to surprises now, but with a thrill of wonder. She could not yet spell out all their deep meaning, and so she pondered "them in her heart," hiding them away in her maternal soul, that their deep secrets might ripen and blossom in the summer of the after-years.

The shepherds appear no more in the Gospel story. We see them returning to their task "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen," and then the mantle of a deep silence falls upon them. As a lark, rising heavenward, loses itself from our sight, becoming a sweet song in the sky, so

these anonymous shepherds, these first disciples of the Lord, having laid their tribute at His feet—in the name of humanity saluting the Christ who was to be—now pass out of our sight, leaving for us the example of their heavenward look and their simple faith, and leaving, too, their *Glorias*, which in multiplied reverberations fill all lands and all times, the earthly prelude of the New, the eternal Song.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS.

WHEN the Old Testament closed, prophecy had thrown upon the screen of the future the shadows of two persons, cast in heavenly light. Sketched in outline rather than in detail, still their personalities were sufficiently distinct as to attract the gaze and hopes of the intervening centuries; while their differing, though related missions were clearly recognized. One was the Coming ONE, who should bring the "consolation" of Israel, and who should Himself be that Consolation; and gathering into one august title all such glittering epithets as Star, Shiloh, and Emmanuel, prophecy reverently saluted Him as "the Lord," paying Him prospective homage and adoration. The other was to be the herald of another Dispensation, proclaiming the new kingdom and the new King, running before the royal chariot, even as Elijah ran before Ahab to the ivory palace at Jezreel, his voice then dying away in silence, as he himself passes out of sight behind the throne. Such were the two figures that prophecy, in a series of dissolving views, had thrown forward from the Old into the New Testament; and such was the signal honour accorded to the Baptist, that while many of the Old Testament characters appear as reflections in the New, his is

the only human shadow thrown back from the New into the Old.

The forerunner thus had a virtual existence long before the time of the Advent. Known by his synonym of Elias, the prophesied, he became as a real presence, moving here and there among their thoughts and dreams, and lighting up their long night with the beacon-fires of new and bright hopes. His voice seemed familiar, even though it came to them in far-distant echoes, and the listening centuries had caught exactly both its accent and its message. And so the preparer of the way found his own path prepared; for John's path and "the way of the Lord" were the same; it was the way of obedience and of sacrifice. The two lives were thus thrown into conjunction from the first, the lesser light revolving around the Greater, as they fulfil their separate courses—separate indeed, as far as the human must ever be separated from the Divine, yet most closely related.

Living thus through the pre-Advent centuries, both in the Divine purpose and in the thoughts and hopes of men, so early designated to his heraldic office, "My messenger," in a singular sense, as no other of mortals could ever be, it is no matter of apology, or even of surprise, that his birth should be attended by so much of the supernatural. The Divine designation seems to imply, almost to demand, a Divine declaration; and in the birth-story of the Baptist the flashes of the supernatural, such as the angelic announcement and the miraculous conception, come with a simple naturalness. The prelude is in perfect symphony with the song. St. Luke is the only Evangelist who gives us the birth-story. The other three speak only of his mission, introducing him to us abruptly, as, like

another Moses, he comes down from his new Sinai with the tables of the law in his hands and the strange light upon his face. St. Luke takes us back to the infancy, that we may see the beginnings of things, the Divine purpose enwrapped in swaddling clothes, as it once was set adrift in a rush-plaited ark. Back of the message he puts the man, and back of the man he puts the child—for is not the child a prophecy or invoice of the man?—while all around the child he puts the environment of home, showing us the subtle, powerful influences that touched and shaped the young prophet-life. As a plant carries up into its outmost leaves the ingredients of the rock around which its fibres cling, so each upspringing life—even the life of a prophet—carries into its farthest reaches the unconscious influence of its home associations. And so St. Luke sketches for us that quiet home in the hill-country, whose windows opened and whose doors turned toward Jerusalem, the "city of the great" and invisible "King." He shows us Zacharias and Elisabeth, true saints of God, devout of heart and blameless of life, down into whose placid lives an angel came, rippling them with the excitements of new promises and hopes. Where could the first meridian of the New Dispensation run better than through the home of these seers of things unseen, these watchers for the dawn? Where could be so fitting a receptacle for the Divine purpose, where it could so soon and so well ripen? Had not God elected them to this high honour, and Himself prepared them for it? Had He not purposely kept back all earlier, lower shoots, that their whole growth should be upward, one reaching out towards heaven, like the palm, its fruit clustering around its outmost branches? We can easily imagine

what intense emotion the message of the angel would produce, and that Zacharias would not so much miss the intercourse of human speech now that God's thoughts were audible in his soul. What loving preparation would Elisabeth make for this child of hers, who was to be "great in the sight of the Lord"! what music she would strike out from its name, "John" (the Grace of Jehovah), the name which was both the sesame and symbol of the New Dispensation! How her eager heart would outrun the slow months, as she threw herself forward in anticipation among the joys of maternity, a motherhood so exalted! And why did she hide herself for the five months, but that she might prepare herself for her great mission? that in her seclusion she might hear more distinctly the voices that spake to her from above, or that in the silence she might hear her own heart sing?

But neither the eagerness of Elisabeth nor the dumbness of Zacharias is allowed to hasten the Divine purpose. That purpose, like the cloud of old, accommodates itself to human conditions, the slow processions of the humanities; and not until the time is "full" does the hope become a realization, and the infant voice utter its first cry. And now is gathered the rst congregation of the new era. It is but a family gathering, as the neighbours and relatives come together for the circumcising of the child—which rite was always performed on the corresponding day of the week after its birth; but it is significant as being the first of those ever-widening circles that moving outwards from its central impulse, spread rapidly over the land, as they are now rapidly spreading over all lands. Zacharias, of course, was present; but mute and deaf, he could only sit apart, a silent spectator. Elisabeth, as we may

gather from various references and hints, was of modest and retiring disposition, fond of putting herself in the shade, of standing behind; and so now the conduct of the ceremony seems to have fallen into the hands of some of the relatives. Presuming that the general custom will be observed, that the first-born child will take the name of the father, they proceed to name it "Zacharias." This, however, Elisabeth cannot allow, and with an emphatic negative, she says, "Not so; but he shall be called John." Persistent still in their own course, and not satisfied with the mother's affirmation, the friends turn to the aged and mute priest, and by signs ask how they shall name the child (and had Zacharias heard the conversation, he certainly would not have waited for their question, but would have spoken or written at once); and Zacharias, calling for the writing-table, which doubtless had been his close companion, giving him his only touch of the outer world for the still nine months, wrote, "His name is John." Ah, they are too late! the child was named even long before its birth, named, too, within the Holy Place of the Temple, and by an angel of God. "John" and "Jesus," those two names, since the visit of the Virgin, have been like two bells of gold, throwing waves of music across heart and home, ringing their welcome to "the Christ who is to be," the Christ who is now so near. "His name is John;" and with that brief stroke of his pen Zacharias half rebukes these intrusions and interferences of the relatives, and at the same time makes avowal of his own faith. And as he wrote the name "John," his present obedience making atonement for a past unbelief, instantly the paralyzed tongue was loosed, and he spake, blessing God, throwing the name of his child into a psalm; for what is the *Benedictus* of

Zacharias but "John" written large and full, one sweet and loud magnifying of "the Grace and Favour of Jehovah"?

It is only a natural supposition that when the inspiration of the song had passed away, Zacharias' speech would begin just where it was broken off, and that he would narrate to the guests the strange vision of the Temple, with the angel's prophecy concerning the child. And as the guests depart to their own homes, each one carries the story of this new Apocalypse, as he goes to spread the evangel, and to wake among the neighbouring hills the echoes of Zacharias' song. No wonder that fear came upon all that dwelt round about, and that they who pondered these things in their hearts should ask, "What then shall this child be?"

And here the narrative of the childhood suddenly ends, for with two brief sentences our Evangelist dismisses the thirty succeeding years. He tells us that "the hand of the Lord was with the child," doubtless arranging its circumstances, giving it opportunities, preparing it for the rugged manhood and the rugged mission which should follow in due course; and that "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit," the very same expression he afterwards uses in reference to the Holy Child, an expression we can best interpret by the angel's prophecy, "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb." His native strength of spirit was made doubly strong by the touch of the Divine Spirit, as the iron, coming from its baptism of fire, is hardened and tempered into steel. And so we see that in the Divine economy even a consecrated childhood is a possible experience; and that it is comparatively infrequent is owing rather to our warped views, which possibly may need some readjustment,

than to the Divine purpose and provision. Is the child born into the Divine displeasure, branded from its birth with the mark of Cain? Is it not rather born into the Divine mercy, and all enswathed in the abundance of Divine love? True, it is born of a sinful race, with tendencies to self-will which may lead it astray; but it is just as true that it is born within the covenant of grace; that around its earliest and most helpless years is thrown the ægis of Christ's atonement; and that these innate tendencies are held in check and neutralized by what is called "prevenient grace." In the struggle for that child-life are the powers of darkness the first in the field, outmarching and out-manœuvring the powers of light? Why, the very thought is half-libellous. Heaven's touch is upon the child from the first. Ignore it as we may, deny it as some will, yet back in life's earliest dawn the Divine Spirit is brooding over the unformed world, parting its firmaments of right and wrong, and fashioning a new Paradise. Is evil the inevitable? Must each life taste the forbidden fruit before it can attain to a knowledge of the good? In other words, is sin a great though dire necessity? If a necessity, then it is no longer sin, and we must seek for another and more appropriate name. No; childhood is Christ's purchased and peculiar possession; and the best type of religious experience is that which is marked by no rapid transitions, which breaks upon the soul softly and sweetly as a dawn, its beginnings imperceptible, and so unremembered. So not without meaning is it that right at the gate of the New Dispensation we find the cradle of a consecrated childhood. Placed there by the gate, so that all may see it, and placed in the light, so that all may read it, the childhood of the Baptist tells us what our childhood might oftener be,

if only its earthly guardians—whose hands are so powerful to impress and mould the plastic soul—were, like Zacharias and Elisabeth, themselves prayerful, blameless, and devout.

Now the scene shifts; for we read he "was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." From the fact that this clause is intimately connected with the preceding, "and the child grew and waxed strong in spirit"—the two clauses having but one subject—some have supposed that John was but a child when he turned away from the parental roof and sought the wilderness. But this does not follow. The two parts of the sentence are only separated by a comma, but that pause may bridge over a chasm wide enough for the flow of numerous years, and between the childhood and the wilderness the narrative would almost compel us to put a considerable space. As his physical development was, in mode and proportion, purely human, with no hint of anything unnatural or even supernatural, so we may suppose was his mental and spiritual development. The voice must become articulate; it must play upon the alphabet, and turn sound into speech. It must learn, that it may think; it must study, that it may know. And so the human teacher is indispensable. Children reared of wolves may learn to bark, but, in spite of mythology, they will not build cities and found empires. And where could the child find better instructors than in his own parents, whose quiet lives had been passed in an atmosphere of prayer, and to whom the very jots and tittles of the law were familiar and dear? Indeed, we can scarcely suppose that after having prepared Zacharias and Elisabeth for their great mission, working what is something like a miracle, that she and no one else shall be the mother

of the forerunner, the child should then be torn away from its natural guardians before the processes of its education are complete. It is true they were both "well stricken in years," but that phrase would cover any period from threescore years and upwards, and to that threescore the usual longevity of the Temple ministrants would easily allow another twenty years to be added. May we not, then, suppose that the child-Baptist studied and played under the parental roof, the bright focus to which their hopes, and thoughts, and prayers converged; that here, too, he spent his boyhood and youth, preparing for that priestly office to which his lineage entitled and designated him? for why should not the "messenger of the Lord" be priest as well? We have no further mention of Zacharias and Elisabeth, but it is not improbable that their death was the occasion of John's retirement to the deserts, now a young man, perhaps, of twenty years.

According to custom, John now should have been introduced and consecrated to the priesthood, twenty years being the general age of the initiates; but in obedience to a higher call, John renounces the priesthood, and breaks with the Temple at once and for ever. Retiring to the deserts, which, wild and gloomy, stretch westward from the Dead Sea, and assuming the old prophet garb—a loose dress of camel's hair, bound with a thong of leather—the student becomes the recluse. Inhabiting some mountain cave, tasting only the coarse fare that nature offered—locusts and wild honey—the new Elias has come and has found his Cherith; and here, withdrawn far from "the madding crowd" and the incessant babble of human talk, with no companions save the wild beasts and the bright constellations of that Syrian sky, as they wheel round in their nightly

dance, the lonely man opens his heart to God's great thoughts and purposes, and by constant prayer keeps his clear, trumpet voice in drill. Evidently, John had seen enough of so-called "society," with its cold conventionalities and hypocrisies; his keen eye had seen only too easily the hollowness and corruption that lay beneath the outer gloss and varnish—the thin veneer that but half concealed the worminess and rottenness that lay beneath. John goes out into the desert like another scapegoat, bearing deep within his heart the sins of his nation—sins, alas, which are yet unrepented of and unforgiven! It was doubtless thoughts like these, and the constant brooding upon them, which gave to the Baptist that touch of melancholy that we can detect both in his features and his speech. Austere in person, with a wail in his voice like the sighing of the wind, or charged at times with suppressed thunders, the Baptist reminds us of the Peri, who

> "At the gate
> Of Eden stood disconsolate."

Sin had become to John an awful fact. He could see nothing else. The fragments of the law's broken tables strewed the land, even the courts of the Temple itself, and men were everywhere tripping against them and falling. But John did see something else; it was the day of the Lord, now very near, the day that should come scathing and burning "as a furnace," unless, meanwhile, Israel should repent. So the prophet mused, and as he mused the fire burned within his soul, even the fire of the Refiner, the fire of God.

Our Evangelist characterizes the opening of John's ministry with an official word. He calls it a "showing," a "manifestation," putting upon the very word

the stamp and sanction of a Divine appointment. He is careful, too, to mark the time, so giving the Gospel story its place among the chronologies of the world; which he does in a most elaborate way. He first reads the time on the horoscope of the Empire, whose swinging pendulum was a rising or a falling throne; and he states that it was "the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar," counting the two years of his joint rule with Augustus. Then, as if that were not enough, he notes the hour as indicated on the four quarters of the Hebrew commonwealth, the hour when Pilate, Herod, Philip, and Lysanias were in conjunction, ruling in their divided heavens. Then, as if that even were not enough, he marks the ecclesiastical hour as indicated by the marble time-piece of the Temple; it was when Annas and Caiaphas held jointly the high priesthood. What is the meaning of this elaborate mechanism, wheels within wheels? Is it because the hour is so important, that it needs the hands of an emperor, a governor, three tetrarchs, and two high priests to point it? Ewald is doubtless right in saying that St. Luke, as the historian, wished "to frame the Gospel history into the great history of the world" by giving precise dates; but if that were the Evangelist's main reason, such an accumulation of time-evidence were scarcely necessary; for what do the subsequent statements add to the precision of the first—"In the fifteenth year of Tiberius"? We must, then, seek for the Evangelist's meaning elsewhere. Among the oldest of the Hebrew prophecies concerning the Messiah was that of Jacob. Closing his life, as Moses did afterwards, with a wonderful vision, he looked down on the far-off years, and speaking of the coming "Seed," he said, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a

lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come" (Gen. xlix. 10). Might not this prophecy have been in the thought of the Evangelist when he stayed so much longer than his wont to note times and seasons? Why does he mention Herod and Pilate, Philip and Lysanias, but to show how the sceptre has, alas, departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet, and how the chosen land is torn to pieces by the Roman eagles? And why does he name Annas and Caiaphas, but to show how the same disintegrating forces are at work even within the Temple, when the rightful high priest can be set aside and superseded by the nominee of a foreign and a Pagan power? Verily "the glory has departed from Israel;" and if St. Luke introduces foreign emperors, tetrarchs, and governors, it is that they may ring a muffled peal over the grave of a dead nation, a funeral knell, which, however, shall be the signal for the coming of the Shiloh, and the gathering of the people unto Him.

Such were the times—times of disorganization, disorder, and almost despair—when the word of God came unto John in the wilderness. It came "upon" him, as it literally reads, probably in one of those wonderful theophanies, as when God spake to Moses from the flaming bush, or as when He appeared to Elijah upon Horeb, sending him back to an unfinished task. John obeyed. Emerging from his wilderness retreat, clad in his strange attire, spare in build, his features sharp and worn with fasting, his long, dishevelled hair telling of his Nazarite vow, he moves down to the Jordan like an apparition. His appearance is everywhere hailed with mingled curiosity and delight. Crowds come in ever-increasing numbers, not one class only, but all classes—priests, soldiers, officials, people—until

it seemed as if the cities had emptied themselves into the Jordan valley. And what went they "out for to see"? "A reed shaken with the wind"? A prophesier of smooth things? A preacher of revolt against tyranny? Nay; John was no wind-shaken reed; he was rather the heavenly wind itself, swaying the multitudes at will, and bending hearts and consciences into penitence and prayer. John was no preacher of revolt against the powers that be; in his mind, Israel had revolted more and more, and he must bring them back to their allegiance, or himself die in the attempt. John was no preacher of smooth things; there was not even the charm of variety about his speech. The one burden of his message was, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." But the effect was marvellous. The lone voice from the wilderness swept over the land like the breath of God. Borne forwards on a thousand lips, it echoed through the cities and penetrated into remotest places. Judæa, Samaria, and even distant Galilee felt the quiver of the strange voice, and even from the shore of the Northern Sea men came to sit at the feet of the new teacher, and to call themselves John's disciples. So widespread and so deep was the movement, it sent its ripples even within the royal palace, awaking the curiosity, and perhaps the conscience, of Herod himself. It was a genuine revival of religion, such as Judæa had not witnessed since the days of Ezra, the awaking of the national conscience and of the national hope.

Perhaps it would be difficult, by any analysis of ours, to discover or to define the secret of John's success. It was the resultant, not of one force, but of many. For instance, the hour was favourable. It was the Sabbatic year, when field-work was in the

main suspended, and men everywhere had leisure, mind and hand lying, as it were, fallow. Then, too, the very dress of the Baptist would not be without its influence, especially on a mind so sensitive to form and colour as the Hebrew mind was. Dress to them was a form of duty. They were accustomed to weave into their tassels sacred symbols, so making the external speak of the eternal. Their hands played on the parti-coloured threads most faithfully and sacredly; for were not these the chords of Divine harmonies? But here is one who discards both the priestly and the civilian dress, and who wears, instead, the rough camel's hair robe of the old prophets. The very dress would thus appeal most powerfully to their imagination, carrying back their thoughts to the time of the Theocracy, when Jehovah was not silent as now, and when Heaven was so near, speaking by some Samuel or Elijah. Are those days returning? they would ask. Is this the Elias who was to come and restore all things? Surely it must be. And in the rustle of the Baptist's robe they heard the rustle of Elijah's mantle, dropping a second time by these Jordan banks. Then, too, there was the personal charm of the man. John was young, if years are our reckoning, for he counted but thirty; but in his case the *verve* and energy of youth were blended with the discretion and saintliness of age. What was the world to him, its fame, its luxury and wealth? They were only the dust he shook from his feet, as his spirit sighed for and soared after Heaven's better things. He asks nothing of earth but her plainest fare, a couch of grass, and by-and-by a grave. Then, too, there was a positiveness about the man, that would naturally attract, in a drifting, shifting, vacillating age. The strong will is magnetic; the

weaker wills follow and cluster round it, as swarming bees cluster around their queen. And John was intensely positive. His speech was clear-cut and incisive, with a tremendous earnestness in it, as if a "Thus saith the Lord" were at his heart. John's mood was not the subjunctive, where his words could eddy among the "mays" and "mights;" it was plainly the indicative, or better still, the imperative. He spoke as one who believed, and who intensely felt what he believed. Then, too, there was a certain nobleness about his courage. He knew no rank, no party; he was superior to all. He feared God too much to have any fear of man. He spake no word for the sake of pleasing, and he kept back no word—even the hot rebuke—for fear of offending. Truth to him was more than titles, and right was the only royalty. How he painted the Pharisees—those shiny, slimy men, with creeping, sinuous ways—with that dark epithet "brood of vipers"! With what a fearless courage he denounced the incest of Herod! *He* will not level down Sinai, accommodating it to royal passions! Not he. "It is not lawful for thee to have her"—such were his words, that rolled in upon Herod's conscience like a peal of Sinai's thunder, telling him that law was law, that right was more than might, and purity more than power. Then, too, there was something about his message that was attractive. That word "the kingdom of heaven" struck upon the national heart like a bell, and set it vibrating with new hopes, and awaking all kinds of beautiful dreams of recovered pre-eminence and power.

But while all these were auxiliaries, factors, and co-efficients in the problem of the Baptist's success, they are not sufficient in themselves to account for

that success. It is not difficult for a man of superior mental attainment, and of strong individuality, to attract a following, especially if that following be in the direction of self-interest. The emotions and passions of humanity lie near the surface; they can be easily swept into a storm by the strong or by the pathetic voice. But to reach the conscience, to lift up the veil, and to pass within to that Most Holy of the human soul is what man, unaided, cannot do. Only the Divine Voice can break those deep silences of the heart; or if the human voice is used the power is not in the words of human speech—those words, even the best, are but the dead wires along which the Divine Voice moves—it is the power of God.

> "Some men live near to God, as my right arm
> Is near to me; and then they walk about
> Mailed in full proof of faith, and bear a charm
> That mocks at fear, and bars the door on doubt,
> And dares the impossible."

Just such a man was the Baptist. He was a "man of God." He lived, and moved, and had his being in God. Self to him was an extinct passion. Envy, pride, ambition, jealousy, these were unknown tongues; his pure soul understood not their meaning. Like his great prototype, "the Spirit of the Lord God" was upon him. His life was one conscious inspiration; and John himself had been baptized with the baptism of which he spoke, but which he himself could not give, the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire. This only will account for the wonderful effects produced by his preaching. John, in his own experience, had antedated Pentecost, receiving the "power from on high," and as he spoke it was with a tongue of fire,

a voice in whose accent and tone the people could detect the deeper Voice of God.

But if John could not baptize with the higher baptism, usurping the functions of the One coming after, he could, and he did, institute a lower, symbolic baptism of water, that thus the visible might lead up to the invisible. In what mode John's baptism was administered we cannot tell, nor is it material that we should know. We do know, however, that the baptism of the Spirit—and in John's mind the two were closely related—was constantly referred to in Scripture as an effusion, a "pouring out," a sprinkling, and never once as an immersion. And what was the "baptism of fire" to the mind of John? Was it not that which the prophet Isaiah had experienced, when the angel touched his lips with the live coal taken from the altar, pronouncing over him the great absolution, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" (Isa. vi. 7)? At best, the baptism of water is but a shadow of the better thing, the outward symbol of an inward grace. We need not quarrel about modes and forms. Scripture has purposely left them indeterminate, so that we need not wrangle about them. There is no need that we exalt the shadow, levelling it up to the substance; and still less should we level it down, turning it into a playground for the schools.

Thus far the lives of Jesus and John have lain apart. One growing up in the hill-country of Galilee, the other in the hill-country of Judæa, and then in the isolation of the wilderness, they have never looked in each other's face, though they have doubtless heard often of each other's mission. They meet at last. John had been constantly telling of ONE who was

coming after—"after," indeed, in order of time, but "before," infinitely before, in pre-eminence and authority. Mightier than he, He was the Lord. John would deem it an honour to kneel down before so august a Master, to untie and bear away His shoes; for in such a Presence servility was both becoming and ennobling. With such words as these the crier in the wilderness had been transferring the people's thought from himself, and setting their hearts listening for the Coming One, so preparing and broadening His way. Suddenly, in one of the pauses of his ministrations, a Stranger presents Himself, and asks that the rite of baptism may be administered to Him. There is nothing peculiar about His dress; He is younger than the Baptist—much younger, apparently, for the rough, ascetic life has prematurely aged him—but such is the grace and dignity of His person, such the mingled "strength and beauty" of His manhood, that even John, who never quailed in the presence of mortal before, is awed and abashed now. Discerning the innate Royalty of the Stranger, and receiving a monition from the Higher World, with which he kept up close correspondence, the Baptist is assured that it is He, the Lord and Christ. Immediately his whole manner changes. The voice that has swept over the land like a whirlwind, now is hushed, subdued, speaking softly, deferentially, reverentially. Here is a Presence in which his imperatives all melt away and disappear, a Will that is infinitely higher than his own, a Person for whom his baptism is out of place. John is perplexed; he hesitates, he demurs. "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" and John, Elias-like, would fain have wrapped his mantle around his face, burying out of sight his little "me," in the presence of

the Lord. But Jesus said, "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. iii. 15).

The baptism of Jesus was evidently a new kind of baptism, one in which the usual formulas were strangely out of place; and the question naturally arises, Why should Jesus submit to, and even ask for, a baptism that was so associated with repentance and sin? Could there be any place for repentance, any room for confession, in the Sinless One? John felt the anomaly, and so shrank from administering the rite, till the reply of Jesus put His baptism on different ground—ground altogether clear of any personal demerit. Jesus asked for baptism, not for the washing away of sin, but that He might "fulfil all righteousness." He was baptized, not for His own sake, but for the world's sake. Coming to redeem humanity, He would identify Himself with that humanity, even the sinful humanity that it was. Son of God, He would become a true Son of man, that through His redemption all other sons of men might become true sons of God. Bearing the sins of many, taking away the sin of the world, that heavy burden lay at His heart from the first; He could not lay it down until He left it nailed to His cross. Himself knowing no sin, He yet becomes the Sin-offering, and is "numbered among the transgressors." And as Jesus went to the cross and into the grave mediatorially, as Humanity's Son, so Jesus now passes into the baptismal waters mediatorially, repenting for that world whose heart is still hard, and whose eyes are dry of godly tears, and confessing the sin which He in love has made His own, the "sin of the world," the sin He has come to make atonement for and to bear away.

Such is the meaning of the Jordan baptism, in

which Jesus puts the stamp of Divinity upon John's mission, while John bears witness to the sinlessness of Jesus. But a Higher Witness came than even that of John; for no sooner was the rite administered, and the river-bank regained, than the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God, in the form of a fiery dove descended and alighted on the head of Jesus; while a Voice out of the Unseen proclaimed, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And so the Son of man receives the heavenly, as well as the earthly baptism. Baptized with water, He is now baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, anointed with the unction of the Holy One. But why should the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus in the form of a dove, and afterwards upon the disciples in the form of cloven tongues of fire? We can understand the symbolism of the cloven tongues; for was not their mission to preach and teach, spreading and establishing the kingdom by a consecrated speech—the Divine word carried forward by the human voice? What, then, is the meaning of the dove-form? Does it refer to the dove of the Old Dispensation, which bearing the olive-leaf in its mouth, preached its Gospel to the dwellers in the ark, telling of the abatement of the angry waters, and of a salvation that was near? And was not Jesus a heavenly Dove, bearing to the world the olive-branch of reconciliation and of peace, proclaiming the fuller, wider Gospel of mercy and of love? The supposition, at any rate, is a possible one, while the words of Jesus would almost make it a probable one; for speaking of this same baptism of the Spirit, He says—and in His words we can hear the beat and whir of dove-wings—"He anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim

release to the captives, . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised" (iv. 18).

The interview between Jesus and John was but brief, and in all probability final. They spend the following night near to each other, but apart. The day after, John sees Jesus walking, but the narrative would imply that they did not meet. John only points to Him and says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" and they part, each to follow his separate path, and to accomplish his separate mission.

"The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Such was John's testimony to Jesus, in the moment of his clearest illumination. He saw in Jesus, not as one learned writer would have us suppose, the sheep of David's pastoral, its life encircled with green pastures and still waters—not this, but a lamb, "the Lamb of God," the Paschal Lamb, led all uncomplaining to the slaughter, and by its death bearing away sin—not either the sin of a year or the sin of a race, but "the sin of the world." Never had prophet so prophesied before; never had mortal eye seen so clearly and so deeply into God's great mystery of mercy. How, then, can we explain that mood of disappointment and of doubt which afterwards fell upon John? What does it mean that from his prison he should send two of his disciples to Jesus with the strange question, "Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another?" (vii. 19). John is evidently disappointed—yes, and dejected too; and the Elias still, Herod's prison is to him the juniper of the desert. He thought the Christ would be one like unto himself, crying in the wilderness, but with a louder voice and more penetrating accent. He would be some ardent Reformer, with axe in hand, or fan, and with baptism

of fire. But lo, Jesus comes so different from his thought —with no axe in hand that he can see, with no baptism of fire that he can hear of, a Sower rather than a Winnower, scattering thoughts, principles, beatitudes, and parables, telling not so much of "the wrath to come" as of the love that is already come, if men will but repent and receive it—that John is fairly perplexed, and actually sends to Jesus for some word that shall be a solvent for his doubts. It only shows how this Elias, too, was a man of like passions with ourselves, and that even prophets' eyes were sometimes dim, reading God's purposes with a blurred vision. Jesus returns a singular answer. He says neither Yes nor No; but He goes out and works His accustomed miracles, and then dismisses the two disciples with the message, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." These words are in part a quotation from John's favourite prophet, Isaiah, who emphasized as no other prophet did the evangelistic character of Christ's mission—which characteristic John seems to have overlooked. In his thought the Christ was Judge, the great Refiner, sifting the base from the pure, and casting it into some Gehenna of burnings. But Jesus reminds John that mercy is before and above judgment; that He has come, "not to condemn the world," but to save it, and to save it, not by reiterations of the law, but by a manifestation of love. Ebal and Sinai have had their word; now Gerizim and Calvary must speak.

And so this greatest of the prophets was but human, and therefore fallible. He saw the Christ, no longer

afar off, but near—yea, present; but he saw in part, and he prophesied in part. He did not see the whole Christ, or grasp the full purport of His mission. He stood on the threshold of the kingdom; but the least of those who should pass within that kingdom should stand on a higher vantage-ground, and so be greater than he. Indeed, it seems scarcely possible that John could have fully understood Jesus; the two were so entirely different. In dress, in address, in mode of life, in thought the two were exact opposites. John occupies the border-region between the Old and the New; and though his life appears in the New, he himself belongs rather to the Old Dispensation. His accent is Mosaic, his message a tritonomy, a third giving of the law. When asked the all-important question, "What shall we do?" John laid stress on works of charity, and by his metaphor of the two coats he showed that men should endeavour to equalize their mercies. And when publicans and soldiers ask the same question John gives a sort of transcript of the old tables, striking the negatives of duty: "Extort no more than that which is appointed you;" "Do violence to no man." Jesus would have answered in the simple positive that covered all classes and all cases alike: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." But such was the difference between the Old and the New: the one said, "Do, and thou shalt live;" the other said, "Live, and thou shalt do." The voice of John awoke the conscience, but he could not give it rest. He was the preparer of the way; Jesus was the Way, as He was the Truth and the Life. John was the Voice; Jesus was the Word. John must "decrease" and disappear; Jesus must "increase," filling all times and all climes with His glorious, abiding presence.

But the mission of John is drawing to a close, and dark clouds are gathering in the west. The popular idol still, a hostile current has set against him. The Pharisees, unforgetting and unforgiving, are deadly bitter, creeping across his path, and hissing out their "Devil;" while Herod, who in his better moods had invited the Baptist to his palace, now casts him into prison. He will silence the voice he has failed to bribe, the voice that beat against the chambers of his revelry, like a strange midnight gust, and that set him trembling like an aspen. We need not linger over the last sad tragedy—how the royal birthday was kept, with a banquet to the State officials; how the courtesan daughter of Herodias came in and danced before the guests; and how the half-drunken Herod swore a rash oath, that he would give her anything she might ask, up to the half of his kingdom. Herodias knew well what wine and passion would do for Herod. She even guessed his promise beforehand, and had given full directions to her daughter; and soon as the rash oath had fallen from his lips—before he could recall or change his words—sharp and quick the request is made, "Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger." There is a momentary conflict, and Herod gives the fearful word. The head of John is brought into the banquet-hall before the assembled guests—the long flowing locks, the eyes that even in death seemed to sparkle with the fire of God; the lips sacred to purity and truth, the lips that could not gloss a sin, even the sin of a Herod. Yes; it is there, the head of John the Baptist. The courtiers see it, and smile; Herod sees it, but does not smile. That face haunts him; he never forgets it. The dead prophet lives still, and becomes to Herod another conscience.

"And she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came, and took up the corpse, and buried him; and they went and told Jesus" (Matt. xiv. 11, 12). Such is the *finis* to a consecrated life, and such the work achieved by one man, in a ministry that was only counted by months. Shall not this be his epitaph, recording his faithfulness and zeal, and at the same time rebuking our aimlessness and sloth?—

"He liveth long who liveth well;
All other life is short and vain:
He liveth longest who can tell
Of living most for heavenly gain."

CHAPTER VII.

THE TEMPTATION.

THE waters of the Jordan do not more effectually divide the Holy Land than they bisect the Holy Life. The thirty years of Nazareth were quiet enough, amid the seclusions of nature and the attractions of home; but the double baptism by the Jordan now remits that sweet idyll to the past. The I AM of the New Testament moves forward from the passive to the active voice; the long peace is exchanged for the conflict whose consummation will be the Divine Passion.

The subject of our Lord's temptation is mysterious, and therefore difficult. Lying in part within the domain of human consciousness and experience, it stretches far beyond our sight, throwing its dark projections into the realm of spirit, that realm, "dusk with horrid shade," which Reason may not traverse, and which Revelation itself has not illumined, save by occasional lines of light, thrown into, rather than across it. We cannot, perhaps, hope to have a perfect understanding of it, for in a subject so wide and deep there is room for the play of many hypotheses; but inspiration would not have recorded the event so minutely had it not a direct bearing upon the whole of the Divine Life, and were it not full of pregnant lessons for all times. To Him who suffered within it, it was a wilderness indeed; but to us

"the wilderness and the solitary place" have become "glad, and the desert . . . blossoms as the rose." Let us, then, seek the wilderness reverently yet hopefully, and in doing so let us carry in our minds these two guiding thoughts—they will prove a silken thread for the labyrinth—first, that Jesus was tempted as man; and second, that Jesus was tempted as the Son of man.

Jesus was tempted as man. It is true that in His Person the human and the Divine natures were in some mysterious way united; that in His flesh was the great mystery, the manifestation of God; but now we must regard Him as divested of these dignities and Divinities. They are laid aside, with all other pre-mundane glories; and whatever His miraculous power, for the present it is as if it were not. Jesus takes with Him into the wilderness our manhood, a perfect humanity of flesh and blood, of bone and nerve; no Docetic shadow, but a real body, "made in all things like unto His brethren;" and He goes into the wilderness, to be tempted, not in some unearthly way, as one spirit might be tempted of another, but to be "tempted in all points like as we are," in a fashion perfectly human. Then, too, Jesus was tempted as the Son of man, not only as the perfect Man, but as the representative Man. As the first Adam, by disobedience, fell, and fallen, was driven forth into the wilderness, so the second Adam comes to take the place of the first. Tracking the steps of the first Adam, He too goes out into the wilderness, that He may spoil the spoiler, and that by His perfect obedience He may lead a fallen but redeemed humanity back again to Paradise, reversing the whole drift of the Fall, and turning it into a "rising again for many." And so Jesus goes, as the Representative Man, to do battle for humanity, and to receive in His own Person, not one form of temptation,

as the first Adam did, but every form that malignant Evil can devise, or that humanity can know. Bearing these two facts in mind, we will consider—(1) the circumstances of the Temptation, and (2) the nature of the Temptation.

1. The circumstances of the Temptation. "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness." The Temptation, then, occurred immediately after the twofold baptism; or, as St. Mark expresses it, using his characteristic word, "And straightway the Spirit driveth Him forth into the wilderness" (Mark i. 12). Evidently there is some connection between the Jordan and the wilderness, and there were Divine reasons why the test should be placed directly after the baptism. Those Jordan waters were the inauguration for His mission—a kind of Beautiful Gate, leading up to the different courts and courses of His public ministry, and then up to the altar of sacrifice. The baptism of the Spirit was His anointing for that ministry, and borrowing our light from the after Pentecostal days, His enduement of power for that ministry. The Divine purpose, which had been gradually shaping itself to His mind, now opens in one vivid revelation. The veil of mist in which that purpose had been enwrapped is swept away by the Spirit's breath, disclosing to His view the path redeeming Love must take, even the way of the cross. It is probable, too, that He received at the same time, if not the enduement, at least the consciousness of miraculous power; for St. John, with one stroke of his pen, brushes away those glossy webs that later tradition has spun, the miracles of the Childhood. The Scriptures do not represent Jesus as any prodigy. His childhood, youth, and manhood were like the corre-

sponding phases of other lives; and the Gospels certainly put no aureole about His head—that was the afterglow of traditional fancy. Now, however, as He leaves the wilderness, He goes to open His mission at Cana, where He works His first miracle, turning, by a look, the water into wine. The whole Temptation, as we shall see, was one prolonged attack upon His miraculous power, seeking to divert it into unlawful channels; which makes it more than probable that this power was first consciously received at the baptism—the second baptism of fire; it was a part of the anointing of the Lord He then experienced.

We read that Jesus now was "full of the Holy Spirit." It is an expression not infrequent in the pages of the New Testament, for we have already met with it in connection with Zacharias and Elisabeth; and St. Luke makes use of it several times in his later treatise on the "Acts." In these cases, however, it generally marked some special and sudden illumination or inspiration, which was more or less temporary, the inspiration passing away when its purpose was served. But whether this "filling of the Spirit" was temporary, or permanent, as in the case of Stephen and Barnabas, the expression always marked the highest elevation of human life, when the human spirit was in entire subordination to the Divine. To Jesus, now, the Holy Spirit is given without measure; and we, who in our far-off experiences can recall moments of Divine baptisms, when our spirits seemed for the time to be caught up into Paradise, hearing voices and beholding visions we might not utter, even we may understand in part—though but in part—what must have been the emotions and ecstasies of that memorable hour by the Jordan. How much the opened neavens would mean

to Him, to whom they had been so long and strangely closed! How the Voice that declared His heavenly Sonship, "This is My beloved Son," must have sent its vibrations quivering through soul and spirit, almost causing the tabernacle of His flesh to tremble with the new excitements! Mysterious though it may seem to us, who ask impotently, How can these things be? yet unless we strip the heavenly baptism of all reality, reducing it to a mere play of words, we must suppose that Jesus, who now becomes Jesus Christ, was henceforth more directly and completely than before under the conscious inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What was an atmosphere enswathing the young life, bringing to that life its treasures of grace, beauty, and strength, now becomes a breath, or rather a rushing wind, of God, carrying that life forward upon its mission and upward to its goal. And so we read, He "was led by the Spirit in the wilderness." The verb generally implies pressure, constraint; it is the enforced leading of the weaker by the stronger. In this case, however, the pressure was not upon a resisting, but a yielding medium. The will of Jesus swung round instantly and easily, moving like a vane only in the direction of the Higher Will. The narrative would imply that His own thought and purpose had been to return to Galilee; but the Divine Spirit moves upon Him with such clearness and force—"driveth" is St. Mark's expressive word—that He yields Himself up to the higher impulse, and allows Himself to be carried, not exactly as the heath is swept before the wind, but in a passive-active way, into the wilderness. The wilderness was thus a Divine interjection, thrown across the path of the Son of God and Son of man.

Where it was is a point of no great moment. That

it was in the Desert of Sinai, as some suppose, is most unlikely. Jesus did not so venerate places; nor was it like Him to make distant excursions to put Himself in the track of Moses or Elijah. He beckons them to Him. He does not go to them, not even to make historical repetitions. There is no reason why we may not accept the traditional site of the Quarantania, the wild, mountainous region, intersected by deep, dark gorges, that sweeps westward from Jericho. It is enough to know that it was a wilderness indeed, a wildness, unsoftened by the touch of human strength or skill; a still, vacant solitude, where only the "wild beasts," preying upon each other, or prowling outward to the fringe of civilization, could survive.

In the narrative of the Transfiguration we read that Moses and Elias appeared on the holy mount "talking with Jesus;" and that these two only, of all departed saints, should be allowed that privilege—the one representing the Law, and the other the Prophets—shows that there was some intimate connection between their several missions. At any rate, we know that the emancipator and the regenerator of Israel were specially commissioned to bear Heaven's salutation to the Redeemer. It would be an interesting study, did it lie within the scope of our subject, to trace out the many resemblances between the three. We may, however, notice how in the three lives the same prolonged fast occurs, in each case covering the same period of forty days; for though the expression of St. Matthew would not of necessity imply a total abstention from food, the more concise statement of St. Luke removes all doubt, for we read, "He did eat nothing in those days." Why there should be this fast is more difficult to answer, and our so-called reasons can be only

guesses. We know, however, that the flesh and the spirit, though closely associated, have but few things in common. Like the centripetal and the centrifugal forces in nature, their tendencies and propulsions are in different and opposite directions. The one looks earthward, the other heavenward. Let the flesh prevail, and the life gravitates downwards, the sensual takes the place of the spiritual. Let the flesh be placed under restraint and control, taught its subordinate position, and there is a general uplift to the life, the untrammelled spirit moving upwards toward heaven and God. And so in the Scriptures we find the duty of fasting prescribed; and though the Rabbis have treated it in an *ad absurdum* fashion, bringing it into disrepute, still the duty has not ceased, though the practice may be well-nigh obsolete. And so we find in Apostolic days that prayer was often joined to fasting, especially when a question of importance was under consideration. The hours of fasting, too, as we may learn from the cases of the centurion and of Peter, were the perihelion of the Christian life, when it swung up in its nearest approaches to heaven, getting amid the circles of the angels and of celestial visions. Possibly in the case before us there was such an absorption of spirit, such rapture (using the word in its etymological, rather than in its derived meaning), that the claims of the body were utterly forgotten, and its ordinary functions were temporarily suspended; for to the spirit caught up into Paradise it matters little whether in the body or out of it.

Then, too, the fast was closely related to the temptation; it was the preparation for it. If Jesus is tempted as the Son of man, it must be our humanity, not at its strongest, but at its weakest. It must be under

conditions so hard, no other man could have them harder. As an athlete, before the contest, trains up his body, bringing each muscle and nerve to its very best, so Jesus, before meeting the great adversary in single combat, trains *down* His body, reducing its physical strength, until it touches the lowest point of human weakness. And so, fighting the battle of humanity, He gives the adversary every advantage. He allows him choice of place, of time, of weapons and conditions, so that His victory may be more complete. Alone in the wild, dreary solitude, cut off from all human sympathies, weak and emaciated with the long fast, the Second Adam waits the attack of the tempter, who found the first Adam too easy a prey.

2. The nature of the Temptation. In what form the tempter came to Him, or whether he came in any form at all, we cannot tell. Scripture observes a prudent silence, a silence which has been made the occasion of much speculative and random speech on the part of its would-be interpreters. It will serve no good purpose even to enumerate the different forms the tempter is said to have assumed; for what need can there be for any incarnation of the evil spirit? and why clamour for the supernatural when the natural will suffice? If Jesus was tempted "as we are," will not our experiences throw the truest light on His? We see no shape. The evil one confronts us; he presents thoughts to our minds; he injects some proud or evil imagination; but he himself is masked, unseen, even when we are distinctly conscious of his presence. Just so we may suppose the tempter came to Him. Recalling the declaration made at the baptism, the announcement of His Divine Sonship, the devil says, "If" (or rather "Since," for the tempter is too wary to suggest a

doubt as to His relationship with God) "Thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread.' It is as if he said, "You are a-hungered, exhausted, Your strength worn away by Your long fast. This desert, as You see, is wild and sterile; it can offer You nothing with which to supply Your physical wants; but You have the remedy in Your own hands. The heavenly Voice proclaimed You as God's Son—nay, His beloved Son. You were invested, too, not simply with Divine dignities, but with Divine powers, with authority, supreme and absolute, over all creatures. Make use now of this newly given power. Speak in these newly learned tones of Divine authority, and command this stone that it become bread." Such was the thought suddenly suggested to the mind of Jesus, and which would have found a ready response from the shrinking flesh, had it been allowed to speak. And was not the thought fair and reasonable, to our thinking, all innocent of wrong? Suppose Jesus should command the stone into bread, is it any more marvellous than commanding the water into wine? Is not all bread stone, dead earth transformed by the touch of life? If Jesus can make use of His miraculous power for the benefit of others, why should He not use it in the emergencies of His own life? The thought seemed reasonable and specious enough; and at first glance we do not see how the wings of this dove are tipped, not with silver, but with soot from the "pots." But stop. What does this thought of Satan mean? Is it as guileless and guiltless as it seems? Not quite; for it means that Jesus shall be no longer the Son of man. Hitherto His life has been a purely human life. "Made in all things like unto His brethren," from His helpless infancy, through the gleefulness of childhood, the dis-

cipline of youth, and the toil of manhood, His life has been nourished from purely human sources. His "brooks in the way" have been no secret springs, flowing for Himself alone; they have been the common brooks, open and free to all, and where any other child of man might drink. But now Satan tempts Him to break with the past, to throw up His Son-of-manhood, and to fall back upon His miraculous power in this, and so in every other emergency of life. Had Satan succeeded, and had Jesus wrought this miracle for Himself, putting around His human nature the shield of His Divinity, then Jesus would have ceased to be man. He would have forsaken the plane of human life for celestial altitudes, with a wide gulf—and oh, how wide!—between Himself and those He had come to redeem. And let the perfect humanity go, and the redemption goes with it; for if Jesus, just by an appeal to His miraculous power, can surmount every difficulty, escape any danger, then you leave no room for the Passion, and no ground on which the cross may rest.

Again, the suggestion of Satan was a temptation to distrust. The emphasis lay upon the title, "Son of God." "The Voice proclaimed You, in a peculiar sense, the beloved Son of God; but where have been the marks of that special love? Where are the honours, the heritage of joy, the Son should have? Instead of that, He gives You a wilderness of solitude and privation; and He who rained manna upon Israel, and who sent an angel to prepare a cake for Elias, leaves You to pine and hunger. Why wait longer for help which has already tarried too long? Act now for Yourself. Your resources are ample; use them in commanding this stone into bread." Such was the drift of the tempter's words; it was to make Jesus doubt the

Father's love and care, to lead Him to act, not in opposition to, but independently of, the Father's will. It was an artful endeavour to throw the will of Jesus out of gear with the Higher Will, and to set it revolving around its own self-centre. It was, in reality, the same temptation, in a slightly altered form, which had been only too successful with the first Adam.

The thought, however, was no sooner suggested than it was rejected; for Jesus had a wonderful power of reading thought, of looking into its very heart; and He meets the evil suggestion, not with an answer of His own, but with a singularly apt quotation from the Old Testament: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone." The reference is to a parallel experience in the history of Israel, a narrative from which doubtless Jesus had drawn both strength and solace during His prolonged desert fast. Had not the Divine Voice adopted Israel to a special relationship and privilege, announcing within the palace of Pharaoh, "Israel is My Son, My firstborn"? (Exod. iv. 22). And yet had not God led Israel for forty years through the desert, suffering him to hunger, that He might humble and prove him, and show him that men are

> "Better than sheep and goats,
> That nourish a blind life within the brain;"

that man has a nature, a life, that cannot live on bread, but—as St. Matthew completes the quotation—"by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"? Some have supposed that by "bread alone" Jesus refers to the manifold provision God has made for man's physical sustenance; that He is not limited to one course, but that He can just as easily supply flesh, or manna, or a thousand things besides. But evidently

such is not the meaning of Jesus. It was not His wont to speak in such literal, commonplace ways. His thought moved in higher circles than His speech, and we must look upward through the letter to find the higher spirit. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," said Jesus to His disciples; and when He caught the undertone of their literalistic questions He explained His meaning in words that will interpret His answer to the tempter: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." So now it is as if He said, "The Will of God is My meat. That Will brought Me hither; that Will detains Me here. Nay, that Will commands Me to fast and hunger, and so abstinence from food is itself My food. I do not fear. This wilderness is but the stone-paved court of My Father's house, whose many chambers are filled with treasures, 'bread enough and to spare,' and can I perish with hunger? I wait His time; I accept His will; nor will I taste of bread that is not of His sending."

The tempter was foiled. The specious temptation fell upon the mind of Jesus like a spark in the sea, to be quenched, instantly and utterly; and though Satan found a powerful lever in the pinch of the terrible hunger—one of the sorest pains our human nature can feel—yet even then he could not wrench the will of Jesus from the will of God. The first Adam doubted, and then disobeyed; the Second Adam rests in God's will and word; and like the limpet on the rocks, washed by angry waves, the pressure of the outward storm only unites His will more firmly to the Father's; nor does it for one moment break in upon that rest of soul. And Jesus never did make use of His miraculous power solely for His own benefit. He would live as a man among men, feeling—probably more intensely than we

do—all the weaknesses and pains of humanity, that He might be more truly the Son of man, the sympathizing High Priest, the perfect Saviour. He became in all points—sin excepted—one with us, so that we might become one with Him, sharing with Him the Father's love on earth, and then sharing His heavenly joys.

Baffled, but not confessing himself beaten, the tempter returns to the charge. St. Luke here inverts the order of St. Matthew, giving as the second temptation what St. Matthew places last. We prefer the order of St. Luke, not only because in general he is more observant of chronology, but because there is in the three temptations what we might call a certain seriality, which demands the second place for the mountain temptation. It is not necessary that we put a literal stress upon the narrative, supposing that Jesus was transported bodily to the "exceeding high mountain." Not only has such a supposition an air of the incredulous about it, but it is set aside by the terms of the narrative itself; for the expression he "showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" cannot be forced into a literalistic mould. It is easier and more natural to suppose that this and the succeeding temptation were presented only to the spirit of Jesus, without any physical accessories; for after all, it is not the eye that sees, but the soul. The bodily eye had not seen the "great sheet let down from heaven," but it was a real vision, nevertheless, leading to very practical results—the readjustment of Peter's views of duty, and the opening of the door of grace and privilege to the Gentiles. It was but a mental picture, as the "man of Macedonia" appeared to Paul, but the vision was intensely real—more real, if that were possible, than the leagues of intervening sea; and

louder to him than all the voices of the deep—of winds, and waves, and storm—was the voice, "Come over and help us," the cry which only the ear of the soul had heard. It was in a similar manner, probably, that the second temptation was presented to Jesus.

He finds Himself upon a lofty eminence, when suddenly, "in a moment of time," as St. Luke expresses it, the world lies unveiled at His feet. Here are fields white with ripened harvests, vineyards red with clustering grapes, groves of olives shimmering in the sunlight like frosted silver, rivers threading their way through a sea of green; here are cities on cities innumerable, quivering with the tread of uncounted millions, streets set with statues, and adorned with temples, palaces, and parks; here are the flagged Roman roads, all pointing to the world's great centre, thronged with chariots and horsemen, the legions of war, and the caravans of trade. Beyond are seas where a thousand ships are skimming over the blue; while still beyond, all environed with temples, is the palace of the Cæsars, the marble pivot around which the world revolves.

Such was the splendid scene set before the mind of Jesus. "All this is mine," said Satan, speaking a half-truth which is often but a whole lie; for he was indeed the "prince of the power of the air," ruling, however, not in absolute kingship, but as a pretender, a usurper; "and I give it to whom I will. Only worship me (or rather, 'do homage to me as Your superior'), and all shall be thine." Amplified, the temptation was this: "You are the Son of God, the Messiah-King, but a King without a retinue, without a throne. I know well all the devious, somewhat slippery ways to royalty; and if You will but assent to my plan, and work on my lines,

I can assure You of a throne that is higher, and of a realm that is vaster, than that of Cæsar. To begin with: You have powers not given to other mortals, miraculous powers. You can command nature as easily as You can obey her. Trade with these at first, freely. Startle men with prodigies, and so create a name and gain a following. Then when that is sufficiently large set up the standard of revolt. The priesthood and the people will flock to it; Pharisees and Sadducees, giving up their paper-chases after phantoms, shadows, will forget their strife in the peace of a common war, and before a united people Rome's legions must retire. Then, pushing out Your borders, and avoiding reverse and disaster by a continual appeal to Your miraculous powers, one after another You will make the neighbouring nations dependent and tributary. So, little by little, You will hem in the might of Rome, until by one desperate struggle You will vanquish the Empire. The lines of history will then be all reversed. Jerusalem will become the mistress, the capital of the world; along all these roads swift messengers shall carry Your decrees; Your word shall be law, and Your will over all human wills shall be supreme."

Such was the meaning of the second temptation. It was the chord of ambition Satan sought to strike, a chord whose vibrations are so powerful in the human heart, often drowning or deafening other and sweeter voices. He put before Jesus the highest possible goal, that of universal empire, and showed how that goal was comparatively easy of attainment, if Jesus would only follow his directions and work on his plans. The objective point at which the tempter aimed was, as in the first temptation, to shift Jesus from the Divine purpose, to detach His will from the Father's will,

and to induce Him to set up a sort of independence. The life of Jesus, instead of moving on steadily around its Divine centre, striking in with absolute precision to the beat of the Divine purpose, should revolve only around the centre of its narrower self, exchanging its grander, heavenlier sweep for certain intermittent, eccentric motions of its own. If Satan could not prevent the founding of "the kingdom," he would, if it were possible, change its character. It should not be the kingdom of heaven, but a kingdom of earth, pure and simple, under earthly conditions and earthly laws. Might should take the place of right, and force the place of love. He would set Jesus after gaining the whole world, that so He might forget that His mission was to save it. Instead of a Saviour, they should have a Sovereign, decked with this world's glory and the pomps of earthly empire.

It is easy to see that if Jesus had been merely man the temptation would have been most subtle and most powerful; for how many of the sons of men, alas, have been led astray from the Divine purpose with a far less bait than a whole world! A momentary pleasure, a handful of glittering dust the more, some dream of place or fame—these are more than enough to tempt men to break with God. But while Jesus was man, the Perfect Man, He was more. The Holy Spirit was now given to Him without measure. From the beginning His will had been subordinate to the Father's, growing up within it and configuring itself to it, even as the ductile metal receives the shape of the mould. The Divine purpose, too, had now been revealed to Him in the vivid enlightenment of the Baptism; for the shadow of the cross was thrown back over His life, at any rate as far as the Jordan. And so the second

temptation fell harmless as the first. The chord of ambition Satan sought to strike was not found in the pure soul of Jesus, and all these visions of victory and empire awoke no response in His heart, any more than the flower-wreaths laid upon the breast of the dead can quicken the beat of the now silent heart.

The answer of Jesus was prompt and decisive. Not deigning to use any words of His own, or to hold any parley, even the shortest, He meets the word of the tempter with a Divine word: "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." The tempting thought is something foreign to the mind of Jesus, something unwelcome, repulsive, and it is rejected instantly. Instead of allowing Himself to be diverted from the Divine purpose, His will detached from the Father's will, He turns to that will and word at once. It is His refuge, His home. The thought of Jesus cannot pass beyond the circle of that will, any more than a dove can pass beyond the over-arching sky. He sees the Throne that is above all thrones, and gazing upon that, worshipping only the Great King, who is over all and in all, the thrones and crowns of earthly dominion are but as motes of the air. The victory was complete. Quickly as it came, the splendid vision conjured up by the tempter disappeared, and Jesus turned away from the path of earthly glory, where power without measure and honours without number awaited Him, to tread the solitary, lowly path of submission and of sacrifice, the path that had a crucifixion, and not a coronation as its goal.

Twice baffled, the enemy comes once again to the charge, completing the series with the pinnacle temptation, to which St. Luke naturally, and as we think

rightly, gives the third place. It follows the other two in orderly sequence, and it cannot well be placed second, as in St. Matthew, without a certain overlapping of thought. If we must adhere to the literalistic interpretation, and suppose Jesus led up to Jerusalem bodily, then, perhaps, St. Matthew's order would be more natural, as that would not necessitate a return to the wilderness. But that is an interpretation to which we are not bound. Neither the words of the narrative nor the conditions of the temptation require it; and when art represents Jesus as flying with the tempter through the air it is a representation both grotesque and gratuitous. Thus far, in his temptations, Satan has been foiled by the faith of Jesus, the implicit trust He reposed in the Father; but if he cannot break in upon that trust, causing it to doubt or disobey, may he not push the virtue too far, goading Him "to sin in loving virtue"? If the mind and heart of Jesus are so grooved in with the lines of the Divine will that he cannot throw them off the metals, or make them reverse their wheels, perhaps he may push them forward so fast and so far as to bring about the collision he seeks—the clash of the two wills. It is the only chance left him, a forlorn hope, it is true, but still a hope, and Satan moves forward, if perchance he may realize it.

As in the second temptation, the wilderness fades out of sight. Suddenly Jesus finds Himself standing on the pinnacle of the Temple, probably the eastern corner of the royal portico. On the one side, deep below, were the Temple courts, crowded with throngs of worshippers; on the other lay the gorge of the Kedron, a giddy depth, which made the eye of the down looker to swim, and the brain to reel. "If (or

rather 'Since') said Satan, Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, to guard Thee; on their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest haply Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." It is as if he said, "You are the Son of God, in a special, favoured sense. You are set in title and authority above the angels; they are Your ministering servants; and You reciprocate the trust Heaven reposes in You. The will of God is more to You than life itself; the word of God outweighs with You thrones and empires. And You do well. Continue thus, and no harm can overtake You. And just to show how absolute is Your faith in God, cast Yourself down from this height. You need not fear, for You will but throw Yourself upon the word of God; and You have only to speak, and unseen angels will crowd the air, bearing You up in their hands. Cast Yourself down, and so test and attest Your faith in God; and doing so You will give to these multitudes indubitable proof of Your Sonship and Messiahship." Such was the argument, specious, but fallacious, of the tempter. Misquoting Scripture by omitting its qualifying clause, distorting the truth into a dangerous error, he sought to impale his Victim on the horn of a dilemma. But Jesus was on the alert. He recognized at once the seductive thought, though, Jacob-like, it had come robed in the assumed dress of Scripture. Is not obedience as sacred as trust? Is not obedience the life, the soul of trust, without which the trust itself is but a semblance, a decaying, corrupt thing? But Satan asks Him to disobey, to set Himself above the laws by which the world is governed. Instead of His will being entirely subordinate, conforming itself in all things to the Divine will, if He should

cast Himself down from this pinnacle it would be putting pressure upon that Divine will, forcing it to repeal its own physical laws, or at any rate to suspend their action for a time. And what would that be but insubordination, no longer faith, but presumption, a tempting, and not a trusting God? The Divine promises are not cheques made payable to "bearer," regardless of character, place, or time, and to be realized by any one who may happen to possess himself of them, anywhere. They are cheques drawn out to "order," crossed cheques, too, negotiated only as the conditions of character and time are fulfilled. The Divine protection and guardianship are indeed assured to every child of God, but only as he "dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, as he abides under the shadow of the Almighty;" in other words, so long as "thy ways" are "His ways." Step out from that pavilion of the Most High, and you step from under the bright bow of promise. Put yourself above, or put yourself out of, the Divine order of things, and the very promise becomes a threatening, and the cloud that else would protect and guide becomes a cloud full of suppressed thunders, and flashing in vivid lightnings its thousand swords of flame. Faith and fidelity are thus inseparable. The one is the calyx, the other the involved corolla; and as they open outwards into the perfect flower they turn towards the Divine will, configuring themselves in all things to that will.

A third time Jesus replied to the tempter in words of Old Testament Scripture, and a third time, too, from the same book of Deuteronomy. It will be observed, however, that the terms of His reply are slightly altered. He no longer uses the "It is written," since Satan himself has borrowed that word, but sub-

stitutes another: "It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." It has been thought by some that Jesus used the quotation in an accommodated sense, referring the "Thou" to the tempter himself, and so making "the Lord thy God" an attestation of His own Divinity. But such an interpretation is forced and unnatural. Jesus would not be likely to hide the deep secret from His own disciples, and announce it for the first time to the ears of the seducer. It is an impossible supposition. Besides, too, it was as *man* that Jesus was tempted. Only on the side of His humanity could the enemy approach Him, and for Jesus now to take refuge in His Divinity would strip the temptation of all its meaning, making it a mere acting. But Jesus does not so throw up humanity, or which is the same thing, take Himself out of it, and when He says, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" He includes Himself in the "thou." Son though He is, He must put Himself under the law that prescribes the relations of man towards God. He must learn obedience as other sons of men. He must submit, that He may serve, not seeking to impose His will upon the Father's will, even by way of suggestion, much less by way of demand, but waiting upon that will in an absolute self-surrender and instant acquiescence. Moses must not command the cloud; all that he is permitted to do is to observe it and follow. To go before God is to go without God, and to go without Him is to go against Him; and as to the angels bearing Him up in their hands, that depends altogether upon the path and the errand. Let it be the Divinely ordered path, and the unseen convoys of heaven will attend, a sleepless, invincible guard; but let it be some self-chosen path, some forbidden way, and the angel's sword will flash

its warning, and send the foot of the unfaithful servant crushing against the wall.

And so the third temptation failed, as did the other two. With but a little tension, Satan had made the will of the first Adam to strike a discordant note, throwing it out of all harmony with the Higher Will; but by no pressure, no enticements, can he influence the Second Adam. His will vibrates in a perfect consonance with the Father's, even under the terrible pressure of hunger, and the more terrible pressure, the fearful impact of evil.

So Satan completed, and so Jesus resisted, "every temptation"—that is, every form of temptation. In the first, Jesus was tempted on the side of His physical nature; in the second the attack was on the side of His intellectual nature, looking out on His political life; while in the third the assault was on the side of His spiritual life. In the first He is tempted as the Man, in the second as the Messiah, and in the third as the Divine Son. In the first temptation He is asked to make use of His newly received miraculous power over nature—passive, unthinking nature; in the second He is asked to throw it over the "world," which in this case is a synonym for humankind; while in the third He is asked to widen the realm of His authority, and to command the angels, nay, God Himself. So the three temptations are really one, though the fields of battle lie in three several planes. And the aim was one. It was to create a divergence between the two wills, and to set the Son in a sort of antagonism to the Father, which would have been another Absalom revolt, a Divine mutiny it is impossible for us even to conceive.

St. Luke omits in his narrative the ministry of

angels mentioned by the other two Synoptists, a sweet postlude we should have missed much, had it been wanting; but he gives us instead the retreat of the adversary: "He departed from Him for a season." How long a season it was we do not know, but a brief one it must have been, for again and again in the story of the Gospels we see the dark shadow of the evil one; while in Gethsemane the "prince of this world" cometh, but to find nothing in "Me." And what was the horror of great darkness, that strange eclipse of soul Jesus suffered upon Calvary, but the same fearful presence, intercepting for a time even the Father's smile, and throwing upon the pure and patient Sufferer a strip of the outer darkness itself?

The test was over. Tried in the fires of a persistent assault, the faith and obedience of Jesus were found perfect. The shafts of the tempter had recoiled upon himself, leaving all stainless and scatheless the pure soul of Jesus. The Son of man had conquered, that all other sons of men may learn the secret of constant and complete victory; how faith overcomes, putting to flight "the armies of the aliens," and making even the weakest child of God "more than conqueror." And from the wilderness, where innocence has ripened into virtue, Jesus passes up, like another Moses, "in the power of the Spirit," to challenge the world's magicians, to baffle their sleight of hand and skill of speech, and to proclaim to redeemed humanity a new Exodus a life-long Jubilee.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GOSPEL OF THE JUBILEE.

IMMEDIATELY after the Temptation Jesus returned, "in the power of the Spirit," and with all the added strength of His recent victories, to Galilee. Into what parts of Galilee He came, our Evangelist does not say; but omitting the visit to Cana, and dismissing the first Galilean tour with a sentence—how "He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all"—St. Luke goes on to record in detail the visit of Jesus to Nazareth, and His rejection by His townsmen. In putting this narrative in the forefront of his Gospel is St. Luke committing a chronological error? or is he, as some suppose, purposely antedating the Nazareth story, that it may stand as a frontispiece to his Gospel, or that it may serve as a key for the after-music? This is the view held by most of our expositors and harmonists, but, as it appears to us, on insufficient grounds; the balance of probability is against it. It is true that St. Matthew and St. Mark record a visit o Nazareth which evidently occurred at a later period of His ministry. It is true also that between their narratives and this of St. Luke there are some striking resemblances, such as the teaching in the synagogue the astonishment of His hearers, their reference to His parentage, and then the reply of Jesus as to a prophet receiving scant honour in his own country—resem-

blances which would seem to indicate that the two narratives were in reality one. But still it is possible to push these resemblances too far, reading out from them what we have first read into them. Let us for the moment suppose that Jesus made two visits to Nazareth; and is not such a supposition both reasonable and natural? It is not necessary that the first rejection should be a final rejection, for did not the Jews seek again and again to kill Him, before the cross saw their dire purpose realized? Remaining for so long in Galilee, would it not be a most natural wish on the part of Jesus to see the home of His boyhood once again, and to give to His townspeople one parting word before taking His farewell of Galilee? And suppose He did, what then? Would He not naturally go to the synagogue—as was His custom in every place—and speak? And would they not listen with the same astonishment, and then harp on the very same questions as to His parentage and brotherhood—questions that would have their readiest and fittest answer in the same familiar proverb? Instead, then, of these resemblances identifying the two narratives, and proving that St. Luke's story is but an amplification of the narratives of the other Synoptists, the resemblances themselves are what we might naturally expect in our supposition of a second visit. But if there are certain coincidences between the two narratives, there are marked differences, which make it extremely improbable that the Synoptists are recording one event. In the visit recorded by St. Luke there were no miracles wrought; while St. Matthew and St. Mark tell us that He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief, but that He "laid His hands on a few sick folk, and healed them." In the narrative by St. Mark

we read that His disciples were with Him while St. Luke makes no mention of His disciples; but St. Luke does mention the tragic ending of the visit, the attempt of the men of Nazareth to hurl Him down from a lofty cliff, an incident St. Matthew and St. Mark omit altogether. But can we suppose the men of Nazareth would have attempted this, had the strong body-guard of disciples been with Jesus? Would they be likely to stand by, timidly acquiescent? Would not Peter's sword have flashed instantly from its scabbard, in defence of Him whom he served and dearly loved? That St. Matthew and St. Mark should make no reference to this scene of violence, had it occurred at the visit they record, is strange and unaccountable; and the omission is certainly an indication, if not a proof, that the Synoptists are describing two separate visits to Nazareth—the one, as narrated by St. Luke, at the commencement of His ministry; and the other at a later date, probably towards its close. And with this view the substance of the Nazareth address perfectly accords. The whole address has the ring of an inaugural message; it is the voice of an opening spring, and not of a waning summer. "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" is the blast of the silver trumpet announcing the beginning of the Messianic year, the year of a truer, wider Jubilee.

It seems to us, therefore, that the chronology of St. Luke is perfectly correct, as he places in the forefront of his Gospel the earlier visit to Nazareth, and the violent treatment Jesus there received. At the second visit there was still a widespread unbelief, which caused Jesus to marvel; but there was no attempt at violence, for His disciples were with Him now, while the report of His Judæan ministry, which had gone before Him,

and the miracles He wrought in their presence, had softened down even Nazareth prejudices and asperities. The events of the first Galilean tour were probably in the following order. Jesus, with His five disciples, goes to Cana, invited guests at the marriage, and here He opens His miraculous commission, by turning the water into wine. From Cana they proceed to Capernaum, where they remain for a short time, Jesus preaching in their synagogue, and probably continuing His miraculous works. Leaving His disciples behind at Capernaum—for between the preliminary call by the Jordan and the final call by the lake the fisher-disciples get back to their old occupations for a while—Jesus goes up to Nazareth, with His mother and His brethren. Thence, after His violent rejection, He returns to Capernaum, where He calls His disciples from their boats and receipt of custom, probably completing the sacred number before setting out on His journey southward to Jerusalem. If this harmony be correct—and the weight of probability seems to be in its favour—then the address at Nazareth, which is the subject for our consideration now, would be the first recorded utterance of Jesus; for thus far Cana gives us one startling miracle, while in Capernaum we find the report of His acts, rather than the echoes of His words. And that St. Luke alone should give us this incident, recording it in such a graphic manner, would almost imply that he had received the account from an eye-witness, probably—if we may gather anything from the Nazarene tone of St. Luke's earlier pages—from some member of the Holy Family.

Jesus has now fairly embarked upon His Messianic mission, and He begins that mission, as prophecy had long foretold He should, in Galilee of the Gentiles.

The rumour of His wonderful deeds at Cana and Capernaum had already preceded Him thither, when Jesus came once again to the home of His childhood and youth. Going, as had been His custom from boyhood, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day (St. Luke is writing for Gentiles who are unversed in Jewish customs), Jesus stood up to read. "The Megilloth," or Book of the Prophets, having been handed to Him, He unrolled the book, and read the passage in Isaiah (lxi. 1) to which His mind had been Divinely directed, or which He had purposely chosen :—

> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
> Because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor,
> He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,
> And recovering of sight to the blind,
> To set at liberty them that are bruised,
> To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Then closing, or rolling up, the book, and handing it back to the attendant, Jesus sat down, and began His discourse. The Evangelist does not record any of the former part of the discourse, but simply gives us the effect produced, in the riveted gaze and the rising astonishment of His auditors, as they caught up eagerly His sweet and gracious words. Doubtless, He would explain the words of the prophet, first in their literal, and then in their prophetic sense; and so far He carried the hearts of His hearers with Him, for who could speak of their Messianic hopes without awaking sweet music in the Hebrew heart? But directly Jesus applies the passage to Himself, and says, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears," the fashion of their countenance alters; the Divine emphasis He puts upon the ME curdles in their heart, turning their pleasure and wonder into incredulity, envy, and a

perfect frenzy of rage. The primary reference of the prophecy seems to have been to the return of Israel from captivity. It was a political Jubilee he proclaimed, when Zion should have a "garland for ashes," when the captive should be free, and aliens should be their servants. But the flowers of Scripture are mostly double; its pictures and parables have often a nearer meaning, and another more remote, or a spiritual, involved in the literal sense. That it was so here is evident, for Jesus takes this Scripture—which we might call a Babylonish garment, woven out of the Exile—and wraps it around Himself, as if it belonged to Himself alone, and were so intended from the very first. His touch thus invests it with a new significance; and making this Scripture a vestment for Himself, Jesus, so to speak, shakes out its narrower folds, and gives it a wider, an eternal meaning. But why should Jesus select this passage above all others? Were not the Old Testament Scriptures full of types, and shadows, and prophecies which testified of Him, any one of which He might have appropriated now? Yes, but no other passage so completely answered His design, no other was so clearly and fully declarative of His earthly mission. And so Jesus selected this picture of Isaiah, which was at once a prophecy and an epitome of His own Gospel, as His inaugural message, His manifesto.

The Mosaic Code, in its play upon the temporal octaves, had made provision, not only for a weekly Sabbath, and for a Sabbath year, but it completed its cycle of festivals by setting apart each fiftieth year as a year of special grace and gladness. It was the year of redemption and restoration, when all debts were remitted, when the family inheritance, which by the

pressure of the times had been alienated, reverted to its original owner, and when those who had mortgaged their personal liberty regained their freedom. The "Jubilee" year, as they called it—putting into its name the play of the priestly trumpets which ushered it in—was thus the Divine safeguard against monopolies, a Divine provision for a periodic redistribution of the wealth and privileges of the theocracy; while at the same time it served to keep intact the separate threads of family life, running its lines of lineage down through the centuries, and across into the New Testament. Seizing upon this, the gladdest festival of Hebrew life, Jesus likens Himself to one of the priests, who with trumpet of silver proclaims "the acceptable year of the Lord." He finds in that Jubilee a type of His Messianic year, a year that shall bring, not to one chosen race alone, but to a world of debtors and captives, remissions and manumissions without number, ushering in an era of liberty and gladness. And so in these words, adapted and adopted from Isaiah, Jesus announces Himself as the world's Evangelist, and Healer, and Emancipator; or separating the general message into its prismatic colours, we have the three characteristics of Christ's Gospel—(1) as the Gospel of Love; (2) the Gospel of Light; and (3) the Gospel of Liberty.

1. The Gospel of Jesus was the Gospel of Love. "He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor." That there is a Gospel even in the Old Testament no one will attempt to deny, and able writers have delighted in tracing out the evangelism that, like hidden veins of gold, runs here and there, now embedded deep in historical strata, and now cropping out in the current of prophetical speech. Still, an ear but little trained to harmonies can detect a marvellous difference between the

tone of the Old and the tone of the New Dispensation. "Evangelists" is scarcely the name we should give to the prophets and preachers of the Old Testament, if we except that prophet of the dawn, Isaiah. They came, not as the bearers of glad tidings, but with the pressure, the burden of a terrible "woe" upon them. With a voice of threat and doom they recall Israel back to the ways of fidelity and purity, and with the caustic of biting words they seek to burn out the cancer of national corruption. They were no doves, those old-time prophets, building their nests in the blossoming olives, in soft accents telling of a winter past and a summer near; they were storm-birds rather, beating with swift, sad wings on the crest of sullen waves, or whirling about among the torn shrouds. Even the eremite Baptist brought no evangel. He was a sad man, with a sad message, telling, not of the right which men should do, but of the wrong they should not do, his ministry, like that of the law, being a ministry of condemnation. Jesus, however, announces Himself as the world's Evangelist. He declares that He is anointed and commissioned to be the bearer of good, glad tidings to man. At once the Morning Star and Sun, He comes to herald a new day; nay, He comes to make that day. And so it was. We cannot listen to the words of Jesus without noticing the high and heavenly pitch to which their music is set. Beginning with the Beatitudes, they move on in the higher spaces, striking the notes of courage, hope, and faith, and at last, in the guest-chamber, dropping down to their key-note, as they close with an *eirenicon* and a benediction. How little Jesus played upon men's fears! how, instead, He sought to inspire them with new hopes, telling of the possibilities of goodness, the

perfections which were within reach of even the human endeavour! How seldom you catch the tone of despondency in His words! As He summons men to a life of purity, unselfishness, and faith, His are not the voice and mien of one who commands to a forlorn hope. There is the ring of courage, conviction, certainty about His tone, a hopefulness that was itself half a victory. Jesus was no Pessimist, reading over the grave of departed glories His "ashes to ashes;" He who knew our human nature best had most hopes of it, for He saw the Deity that was back of it and within it.

And just here we touch what we may call the fundamental chord in the Gospel of Jesus, the Fatherhood of God; for though we can detect other strains running through the music of the Gospel, such as the Love of God, the Grace of God, and the Kingdom of God, yet these are but the consonant notes completing the harmonic scale, or the variations that play about the Divine Fatherhood. To the Hebrew conception of God this was an element altogether new. To their mind JEHOVAH is the Lord of hosts, an invisible, absolute Power, inhabiting the thick darkness, and speaking in the fire. Sinai thus throws its shadow across the Old Testament Scriptures, and men inhale an atmosphere of law rather than of love.

But what a transformation was wrought in the world's thought and life as Jesus unfolded the Divine Fatherhood! It altered the whole aspect of man's relation to God, with a change as marked and glorious as when our earth turns its face more directly to the sun, to find its summer. The Great King, whose will commanded all forces, became the Great Father, in whose compassionate heart the toiling children of men might find refuge and rest. The "Everlasting Arms" were none

the less strong and omnipotent; but as Jesus uncovered them they seemed less distant, less rigid; they became so near and so gentle, the weakest child of earth might not fear to lay its tired heart upon them. Law was none the less mighty, none the less majestic, but it was now a transfigured law, all lighted up and suffused with love. No longer was life one round of servile tasks, demanded by an inexorable, invisible Pharaoh; no longer was it a trampled playground, where all the flowers are crushed, as Fate and Chance take their alternate innings. No; life was ennobled, adorned with new and rare beauties; and when Jesus opened the gate of the Divine Fatherhood the light that was beyond, and that "never was on sea or land," shone through, putting a heavenliness upon the earthly, and a Divineness upon the human life. What better, gladder tidings could the poor (whether in spirit or in life) hear than this—that heaven was no longer a distant dream, but a present and most precious reality, touching at every point, and enfolding their little lives; that God was no longer hostile, or even indifferent to them, but that He cared for them with an infinite care, and loved them with an infinite love? Thus did Jesus proclaim the "good tidings;" for love, grace, redemption, and heaven itself are all found within the compass of the Fatherhood. And He who gave to His disciples, in the *Paternoster*, a golden key for heaven's audience-chamber, speaks that sacred name "Father" even amid the agonies of the cross, putting the silver trumpet to His parched and quivering lips, so that earth may hear once again the music of its new and more glorious Jubilee.

2. The Gospel of Jesus was a Gospel of Light. "And recovering of sight to the blind," which is the

Septuagint rendering of the Hebrew passage in Isaiah, "the opening of the prison to them that are bound." At first sight this appears to be a break in the Jubilee idea; for physical cures, such as the healing of the blind, did not come within the scope of Jubilatic mercies. The original expression, however, contains a blending of figures, which together preserve the unity of the prophetic picture. Literally it reads, "The opening of the eyes to them that are bound;" the figure being that of a captive, whose long captivity in the darkness has filmed his vision, and who now passes through the opened door of his prison into the light of day.

In what way shall we interpret these words? Are they to be taken literally, or spiritually? or are both methods equally legitimate? Evidently they are both intended, for Jesus was the Light-bringer in more senses than one. That the Messiah should signalize His advent by performing wonders and signs, and by working physical cures, was certainly the teaching of prophecy, as it was a fixed and prominent hope in the expectation of the Jews. And so, when the despondent Baptist sent two of his disciples to ask "Art Thou He that should come?" Jesus gave no direct answer, but turning from His questioners to the multitude of sick who pressed around Him, He healed their sick, and gave sight to many that were blind. Then returning to the surprised strangers, He bids them carry back to their master these visible proofs of His Messiahship—how that "lepers are cleansed, and the blind receive their sight." Jesus Himself had a wonderful power of vision. His eyes were Divinely bright, for they carried their own light. Not only had He the gift of prescience, the forward-looking eye; He had what for want of a word we may call the gift of prescience, the

eye that looked within, that saw the heart and soul of things. What a strange fascination there was in His very look! how it flashed like a subtle lightning, striking and scathing with its holy indignation the half-veiled meanness and hypocrisy! and how again, like a beam of light, it fell upon Peter's soul, thawing the chilled heart, and opening the closed fountain of his tears, as an Alpine summer falls on the rigid glacier, and sends it rippling and singing through the lower vales. And had not Jesus an especial sympathy for cases of ophthalmic distress, paying to the blind a peculiar attention? How quickly He responded to Bartimæus—"What is it that I shall do for thee?"—as if Bartimæus were conferring the benefit by making his request. Where on the pages of the four Gospels do we find a picture more full of beauty and sublimity than when we read of Jesus taking the blind man by the hand, and leading him out of the town? What moral grandeur and what touching pathos are there! and how that stoop of gentleness makes Him great! No other case is there of such prolonged and tender sympathy, where He not only opens the gates of day for the benighted, but leads the benighted one up to the gates. And why does Jesus make this difference in His miracles, that while other cures are wrought instantly, even the raising of the dead, with nothing more than a look, a word, or a touch, in healing the blind He should work the cure, as it were, in parts, or by using such intermediaries as clay, saliva, or the water of Siloam's pool? Must it not have been intentional? It would seem so, though what the purpose might be we can only guess. Was it so gradual an inletting of the light, because a glare too bright and sudden would only confuse and blind? or did Jesus

linger over the cure with the pleasure of one who loves to watch the dawn, as it paints the east with vermilion and gold? or did Jesus make use of the saliva and clay, that like crystal lenses, they might magnify His power, and show how His will was supreme, that He had a thousand ways of restoring sight, and that He had only to command even unlikely things, and light, or rather sight, should be? We do not know the purpose, but we do know that physical sight was somehow a favourite gift of the Lord Jesus, one that He handed to men carefully and tenderly. Nay, He Himself said that the man of Jerusalem had been born blind "that the works of God should be manifest in him;" that is, his firmament had been for forty years darkened that his age, and all coming ages, might see shining within it the constellations of Divine Pity and Divine Power.

But while Jesus knew well the anatomy of the natural eye, and could and did heal it of its disorders, putting within the sunken socket the rounded ball, or restoring to the optic nerve its lost powers, this was not the only sight He brought. To the companion clauses of this prophecy, where Jesus proclaims deliverance to the captives, and sets at liberty them that are bruised, we are compelled to give a spiritual interpretation; and so "the recovering of sight to the blind" demands a far wider horizon than the literalistic sense offers. It speaks of the true Light which lighteth every man, that spiritual photosphere that environs and enswathes the soul, and of the opening and adjusting of the spiritual sense; for as sight without light is darkness, so light without sight is darkness still. The two facts are thus related, each useless apart from the other, but together producing what we call vision

The recovering of sight to the blind is thus the universal miracle. It is the "Let light be" of the new Genesis, or, as we prefer to call it, the "regeneration." It is the dawn, which, breaking over the soul, broadens unto the perfect day, the heavenly, the eternal noon. Jesus Himself recognized this binoculism, this double vision. He says (John xvi. 16), "A little while, and ye behold Me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see Me," using two altogether different words—the one speaking of the vision of the sense, the other of the deeper vision of the soul. And it was so. The disciples' vision of the Christ, at least so long as the bodily presence was with them, was the earthly, physical vision. The spiritual Christ was, in a sense, lost, masked in the corporeal. The veil of His flesh hung dense and heavy before their eyes, and not until it was uplifted on the cross, not until it was rent in twain, did they see the mysterious Holy Presence that dwelt within the veil. Nor was the clearer vision given them even now. The dust of the sepulchre was in their eyes, blurring, and for a time half-blinding them —the anointing with the clay. The emptied grave, the Resurrection, was their "pool of Siloam," washing away the blinding clay, the dust of their gross, materialistic thoughts. Henceforth they saw Christ, not, as before, ever coming and going, but as the ever-present, the abiding One. In the fuller light of the Pentecostal flames the unseen Christ became more near and more real than the seen Christ ever was. Seeing Him as visible, their minds were holden, somewhat perplexed; they could neither accomplish much nor endure much; but seeing Him who had become invisible, they were a company of invincibles. They could do and they could endure anything; for was not the I AM with them always?

Now, even in the physical vision there is a wonderful correspondence between the sight and the soul, the prospect and introspect. As men read the outward world they see pretty much the shadow of themselves, their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. In the German fable the travelled stork had nothing to say about the beauty of the fields and wonders of the cities over which it passed, but it could discourse at length about the delicious frogs it had found in a certain ditch. Exactly the same law rules up in the higher vision. Men see what they themselves love and are; the sight is but a sort of projection of the soul. As St. Paul says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of God;" the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him are "things which eye saw not, and ear heard not." And so Jesus gives sight by renewing the soul; He creates around us a new heaven and a new earth, by creating a new, a clean heart within us. Within every soul there are the possibilities of a Paradise, but these possibilities are dormant. The natural heart is a chaos of confusion and darkness, until it turns towards Jesus as its Saviour and its Sun, and henceforth revolves around Him in its ever-narrowing circles.

3. The Gospel of Jesus was a Gospel of Liberty. "He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives," "to set at liberty them that are bruised." The latter clause is not in the original prophecy, but is a rough adaptation of another passage in Isaiah (lviii. 6). Probably it was quoted by Jesus in His address, and so was inserted by the Evangelist with the passages read; for in the New Testament the quotations from the Old are grouped together by affinities of spirit, rather than by the law of textual continuity. The two passages

are one in their proclamation and promise of liberty, but they by no means cover the same ground. The former speaks of the liberation of captives, those whom the exigencies of war or some change of fortune have thrown into prison; the latter speaks of deliverance to the oppressed, those whose personal liberties may not be impawned, but whose lives are made hard and bitter under severe exactions, and whose spirits are broken, crushed beneath a weight of accumulated ills. Speaking generally, we should call the one an amnesty, and the other an enfranchisement; for one is the offer of freedom to the captive, the other of freedom to the slave; while together they form an act of emancipation for humanity, enfranchising and ennobling each individual son of man, and giving to him, even the poorest, the freedom of God's world.

In what sense, then, is Jesus the great Emancipator? It would be easy to show that Jesus, personally, was a lover of freedom. He could not brook restraints. Antiquity, conventionalism, had no charms for Him. Keenly in touch with the present, He did not care to take the cold, clammy hand of a dead Past, or allow it to prescribe His actions. Between the right and the wrong, the good and the evil, He put a wall of adamant, God's eternal "No;" but within the sphere of the right, the good, He left room for largest liberties. He observed forms—occasionally, at least—but formalism He could not endure. And so Jesus was constantly coming into collision with the Pharisaic school of thought, the school of routinists, casuists, whose religion was a glossary of terms, a volume of formulas and negations. To the Pharisee religion was a cold, dead thing, a mummy, all enswathed in the cerecloths of tradition; to Jesus it was a living soul within a living form, an

angel of grace and beauty, whose wings would bear her aloft to higher, heavenlier spheres, and whose feet and hands fitted her just as well for the common walks of life, in a beautiful, every-day ministry of blessing. And how Jesus loved to give personal liberty to man—to remove the restrictions disease had put around their activities, and to leave them physically, mentally free! And what were His miracles of healing but proclamations of liberty, in the lowest sense of that word? He found the human body enfeebled, enslaved; here it was an arm, there an eye, so held in the grip of disease that it was as if dead. But Jesus said to Disease, "Loose that half-strangled life and let it go," and in an instant it was free to act and feel, finding its lesser jubilee. Jesus saw the human mind led into captivity. Reason was dethroned and immured in the dungeon, while the feet of lawless passions were trampling overhead. But when Jesus healed the demoniac, the imbecile, the lunatic, what was it but a mental jubilee, as He gives peace to a distracted soul, and leads banished Reason back to her Jerusalem?

But these deliverances and liberties, glorious as they are, are but figures of the true, which is the enfranchisement of the soul. The disciples were perplexed and sorely disappointed that Jesus should die without having wrought any "redemption" for Israel. This was their one dream, that the Messiah should break in pieces the hated Roman yoke, and effect a political deliverance. But they see Him moving steadily to His goal, taking no note of their aspirations, or noticing them only to rebuke them, and scarce giving a passing glance to these Roman eagles, which darken the sky, and cast their ominous shadows over the homes and fields of Israel. But Jesus had not

come into the world to effect any local, political redemption; another Moses could have done that. He had come to lead captive the captivity of Sin, as Zacharias had foretold, "that being delivered out of the hand of our (spiritual) enemies, we might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life." The sphere of His mission was where His kingdom should be, in the great interior of the heart. A Prophet like unto Moses, but infinitely greater than he, He too leaves the palace, of the Eternal, laying aside, not the robes of a prospective royalty, but the glories He possessed with the Father; He too assumes the dress, the speech, nay, the very nature, of the race He has come to redeem. And when no other ransom was sufficient He "offered Himself without spot to God," "our Passover, sacrificed for us," so sprinkling the doorway of the new Exodus with His own blood. But here we stand on the threshold of a great mystery; for if angels bend over the mercy-seat, desiring, but in vain, to read the secret of redemption, how can our finite minds grasp the great thought and purpose of God? We do know this, however, for it is the oft-repeated truth of Scripture, that the life, or, as St. Peter puts it, "the precious blood of Christ," was, in a certain sense, our ransom, the price of our redemption. We say "in a certain sense," for the figure breaks down if we press it unduly, as if Heaven had held a parley with the power that had enslaved man, and, at a stipulated price, had bought him off. That certainly was no part of the Divine purpose and fact of redemption. But an atonement was needed in order to make salvation possible; for how could God, infinitely holy and just, remit the penalty due to sin with no expression of His abhorrence of sin, without

destroying the dignity of law, and reducing justice to a mere name? But the obedience and death of Christ were a satisfaction of infinite worth. They upheld the majesty of law, and at the same time made way for the interventions of Divine Love. The cross of Jesus was thus the place where Mercy and Truth met together, and Righteousness and Peace kissed each other. It was at once the visible expression of God's deep hatred of sin, and of His deep love to the sinner. And so, not virtually simply, in some far-off sense, but in truest reality, Jesus "died for our sins," Himself tasting death that we might have life, even the life "more abundant," the life everlasting; suffering Himself to be led captive by the powers of sin, bound to the cross and imprisoned in a grave, that men might be free in all the glorious liberty of the children of God.

But this deliverance from sin, the pardon for past offences, is but one part of the salvation Jesus provides and proclaims. Heaven's angel may light up the dungeon of the imprisoned soul; he may strike off its fetters, and lead it forth into light and liberty; but if Satan can reverse all this, and fling back the soul into captivity, what is that but a partial, intermittent salvation, so unlike Him whose name is Wonderful? The angel said, "He shall save His people," not from the effects of their sin, from its guilt and condemnation alone, but "from their sins." That is, He shall give to the pardoned soul power over sin; it shall no longer have dominion over him; captivity itself shall be led captive; for

> "His grace, His love, His care
> Are wider than our utmost need,
> And higher than our prayer."

Yes, verily; and the life that is hid with Christ in God, that, with no side-glances at self, is set apart utterly to do the Divine will, that abandons itself to the perfect keeping of the perfect Saviour, will find on earth the "acceptable year of the Lord," its years, henceforth, years of liberty and victory, a prolonged Jubilee.

CHAPTER IX.

A SABBATH IN GALILEE.

WE should naturally expect that our physician-Evangelist would have a peculiar interest in Christ's connection with human suffering and disease, and in this we are not mistaken.

It is almost a superfluous task to consider what our Gospels would have been had there been no miracles of healing to record; but we may safely say that such a blank would be inexplicable, if not impossible. Even had prophecy been utterly silent on the subject, should we not look for the Christ to signalize His advent and reign upon earth by manifestations of His Divine power? A Man amongst men, human yet superhuman, how can He manifest the Divinity that is within, except by the flashings forth of His supernatural power? Speech, however eloquent, however true, could not do this. There must be a background of deeds, visible credentials of authority and power, or else the words are weak and vain—but the play of a borealis in the sky, beautiful and bright indeed, but distant, inoperative, and cold. If the prophets of old, who were but acolytes swinging their lamps and singing their songs before the coming Christ, were allowed to attest their commission by occasional enduements of miraculous power, must not the Christ Himself prove His super-

humanity by fuller measures and exhibitions of the same power? And where can He manifest this so well as in connection with the world's suffering, need, and pain? Here is a background prepared, and all dark enough in sooth; where can He write so well that men may read His messages of good-will, love, and peace? Where can He put His sign manual, His Divine autograph, better than on this firmament of human sorrow, disease, and woe? And so the miracles of healing fall naturally into the story; they are the natural and necessary accompaniments of the Divine life upon earth.

The first miracle that Jesus wrought was in the home at Cana; His first miracle of healing was in the synagogue. He thus placed Himself in the two pivotal centres of our earthly life; for that life, with its heavenward and earthward aspects, revolves about the synagogue and the home. He touches our human life alike on its temporal and its spiritual side. To a nature like that of Jesus, which had an intense love for what was real and true, and as intense a scorn for what was superficial and unreal, it would seem as if a Hebrew synagogue would offer but few attractions. True, it served as the visible symbol of religion; it was the shrine where the Law and the Prophets spoke; what spiritual life there was circled and eddied around its door; while its walls, pointing to Jerusalem, kept the scattered populations in touch with the Temple, that marbled dream of Hebraism; but in saying this we say nearly all. The tides of worldliness and formality, which, sweeping through the Temple gates, had left a scum of mire even upon the sacred courts, chilling devotion and almost extinguishing faith, had swept over the threshold of the synagogue. There the

scribes had usurped Moses' seat, exalting Tradition as a sort of essence of Scripture, and deadening the majestic voices of the law in the jargon of their vain repetitions. But Jesus does not absent Himself from the service of the synagogue because the fires upon its altars are dulled and quenched by the down-draught of the times. To Him it is the house of God, and if others see it not, He sees a ladder of light, with ascending and descending angels. If others hear but the voices of man, all broken and confused, He hears the Diviner voice, still and small; He hears the music of the heavenly host, throwing down their *Glorias* upon earth. The pure in heart can find and see God anywhere. He who worships truly carries his Holy of holies within him. He who takes his own fire need never complain of the cold, and with wood and fire all prepared, he can find or he can build an altar upon any mount. Happy is the soul that has learned to lean upon God, who can say, amid all the distractions and interventions of man, "My soul, wait thou only upon God." To such a one, whose soul is athirst for God, the Valley of Baca becomes a well, while the hot rock pours out its streams of blessing. The art of worship avails nothing if the heart of worship is gone; but if that remain, subtle attractions will ever draw it to the place where "His name is recorded, and where His honour dwelleth."

In his earlier chapters St. Luke is careful to light his Sabbath lamp, telling that such and such miracles were wrought on that day, because the Sabbath question was one on which Jesus soon came into collision with the Pharisees. By their traditions, and the withs of dry and sharp legalities, they had strangled the Sabbath, until life was well-nigh extinct. They had

made rigorous and exacting what God had made bright and restful, fencing it around with negations, and burdening it with penalties. Jesus broke the withs that bound her, let the freer air play upon her face, and then led her back to the sweet liberties of her earlier years. How He does it the sequel will show.

The Sabbath morning finds Jesus repairing to the synagogue at Capernaum, a sanctuary built by a Gentile centurion, and presided over by Jairus, both of whom are yet to be brought into close personal relationship with Christ. From the silence of the narrative we should infer that the courtesy offered at Nazareth was not repeated at Capernaum—that of being invited to read the lesson from the Book of the Prophets. But whether so or not, He was allowed to address the congregation, a privilege which was often accorded to any eminent stranger who might be present. Of the subject of the discourse we know nothing. Possibly it was suggested by some passing scene or incident, as the sculptured pot of manna, in this same synagogue, called forth the remarkable address about the earthly and the heavenly bread (John vi. 31). But if the substance of the discourse is lost to us, its effect is not. It awoke the same feeling of surprise at Capernaum as it had done before among the more rustic minds of Nazareth. There, however, it was the graciousness of His words, their mingled "sweetness and light," which so caused them to wonder; here at Capernaum it was the "authority" with which He spoke that so astonished them, so different from the speech of the scribes, which, for the most part, was but an iteration of quibbles and trivialities, with just as much of originality as the "old clo'" cries of our modern streets. The speech of Jesus came as a breath from the upper air; it was the intense

language of One who possessed the truth, and who was Himself possessed by the truth. He dealt in principles, not platitudes; in eternal facts, and not in the fancies of gossamer that tradition so delighted to spin. Others might speak with the hesitancy of doubt; Jesus spoke in "verilys" and verities, the very essences of truth. And so His word fell upon the ears of men with the tones of an oracle; they felt themselves addressed by the unseen Deity who was behind; they had not learned, as we have, that the Deity of their oracle was within. No wonder that they are astonished at His authority—an authority so perfectly free from any assumptions; they will wonder still more when they find that demons, too, recognize this authority, and obey it.

While Jesus was still speaking—the tense of the verb implies an unfinished discourse—suddenly He was interrupted by a loud, wild shout: "Ah, what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee, who Thou art, the Holy One of God." It was the cry of a man who, as our Evangelist expresses it, "had a spirit of an unclean devil." The phrase is a singular one, in fact unique, and savours a little of tautology; for St. Luke uses the words "spirit" and "devil" as synonyms (ix. 39). Later in his Gospel he would simply have said "he had an unclean devil;" why, then, does he here amplify the phrase, and say he had "a spirit of an unclean devil"? We can, of course, only conjecture, but might it not be because to the Gentile mind—to which he is writing—the powers of evil were represented as personifications, having a corporeal existence? And so in his first reference to demoniacal possession he pauses to explain that these demons are evil "spirits," with

existences altogether separate from the diseased humanity which temporarily they were allowed to inhabit and to rule. Neither can we determine with certainty the meaning of the phrase "an unclean devil," though probably it was so called because it drove its victim to haunt unclean places, like the Gadarene, who had his dwelling among the tombs.

The whole subject of demonology has been called in question by certain modern critics. They aver that it is simply an after-growth of Paganism, the seeds of worn-out mythologies which had been blown over into the Christian mind; and eliminating from them all that is supernatural, they reduce the so-called "possessions" to the natural effects of purely natural causes, physical and mental. It is confessedly a subject difficult as it is mysterious; but we are not inclined, at the bidding of rationalistic clamour, so to strike out the supernatural. Indeed, we cannot, without impaling ourselves upon this dilemma, that Jesus, knowingly or unknowingly, taught as the truth what was not true. That Jesus lent the weight of His testimony to the popular belief is evident; never once, in all His allusions, does He call it in question, nor hint that He is speaking now only in an accommodated sense, borrowing the accents of current speech. To Him the existence and presence of evil spirits was just as patent and as solemn a fact as was the existence of the arch-spirit, even Satan himself. And granting the existence of evil spirits, who will show us the line of limitation, the "Hitherto, but no farther," where their influence is stayed? Have we not seen, in mesmerism, cases of real possession, where the weaker human will has been completely overpowered by the stronger will? when the subject was no longer himself, but his thoughts,

words, and acts were those of another? And are there not, in the experiences of all medical men, and of ministers of religion, cases of depravity so utterly foul and loathsome that they cannot be explained except by the Jewish taunt, "He hath a devil"? According to the teaching of Scripture, the evil spirit possessed the man in the entirety of his being, commanding his own spirit, ruling both body and mind. Now it touched the tongue with a certain glibness of speech, becoming a "spirit of divination," and now it touched it with dumbness, putting upon the life the spell of an awful silence. Not that the obscurity of the eclipse was always the same. There were more lucid moments, the penumbras of brightness, when, for a brief interval, the consciousness seemed to awake, and the human will seemed struggling to assert itself; as is seen in the occasional dualism of its speech, when the "I" emerges from the "we," only, however, to be drawn back again, to have its identity swallowed up as before.

Such is the character who, leaving the graves of the dead for the abodes of the living, now breaks through the ceremonial ban, and enters the synagogue. Rushing wildly within—for we can scarcely suppose him to be a quiet worshipper; the rules of the synagogue would not have allowed that—and approaching Jesus, he abruptly breaks in upon the discourse of Jesus with his cry of mingled fear and passion. Of the cry itself we need not speak, except to notice its question and its confession. "Art Thou come to destroy us?" he asks, as if, somehow, the secret of the Redeemer's mission had been told to these powers of darkness. Did they know that He had come to "destroy" the works of the devil, and ultimately to destroy, with an everlasting destruction, him who had the power of

death, that is, the devil? Possibly they did, for, citizens of two worlds, the visible and the invisible, should not their horizon be wider than our own? At any rate, their knowledge, in some points, was in advance of the nascent faith of the disciples. They knew and confessed the Divinity of Christ's mission, and the Divinity of His Person, crying, "I know Thee, who Thou art, the Holy One of God;" "Thou art the Son of God" (iv. 41), when as yet the faith of the disciples was only a nebula of mist, made up in part of unreal hopes and random guesses. Indeed, we seldom find the demons yielding to the power of Christ, or to the delegated power of His disciples, but they make their confession of superior knowledge as if they possessed a more intimate acquaintance with Christ. "Jesus I know, and Paul I know," said the demon, which the sons of Sceva could not exorcise (Acts xix. 15), while now the demon of Capernaum boasts, "I know Thee, who Thou art, the Holy One of God." Nor was it a vain boast either, for our Evangelist asserts that Jesus did not suffer the demons to speak, "because they knew that He was the Christ" (ver. 41). They knew Jesus, but they feared and hated Him. In a certain sense they believed, but their belief only caused them to tremble, while it left them demons still. Just so is it now:—

> "There are, too, who believe in hell and lie;
> There are who waste their souls in working out
> Life's problem, on these sands betwixt two tides,
> And end, 'Now give us the beasts' part, in death.'"

Saving faith is thus more than a bare assent of the mind, more than some cold belief, or vain repetition of a creed. A creed may be complete and beautiful, but it is not the Christ; it is only the vesture the Christ wears; and alas, there are many still who will

chaffer about, and cast lots for, a creed, who will go directly and crucify the Christ Himself! The faith that saves, besides the assent of the mind, must have the consent of the will and the surrender of the life. It is "with the heart," and not only with the mind, man "believeth unto righteousness."

The interruption brought the discourse of Jesus to an abrupt end, but it served to point the discourse with further exclamations of surprise, while it offered space for a new manifestation of Divine authority and power. It did not in the least disconcert the Master, though it had doubtless sent a thrill of excitement through the whole congregation. He did not even rise from His seat (ver. 38), but retaining the teaching posture, and not deigning a reply to the questions of the demon, He rebuked the evil spirit, saying, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him," thus recognizing the dual will, and distinguishing between the possessor and the possessed. The command was obeyed instantly and utterly; though, as if to make one last supreme effort, he throws his victim down upon the floor of the synagogue, like Samson Agonistes, pulling to the ground the temple of his imprisonment. It was, however, a vain attempt, for he did him "no hurt." The roaring lion had indeed been "muzzled"—which is the primitive meaning of the verb rendered "Hold thy peace"—by the omnipotent word of Jesus.

They were "astonished at His teaching" before, but how much more so now! Then it was a convincing word; now it is a commanding word. They hear the voice of Jesus, sweeping like suppressed thunder over the boundaries of the invisible world, and commanding even devils, driving them forth, just with one rebuke, from the temple of the human soul, as afterwards He

drove the traders from His Father's house with His whip of small cords. No wonder that "amazement came upon all," or that they asked, "What is this word? for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out."

And so Jesus began His miracles of healing at the outmost marge of human misery. With the finger of His love, with the touch of His omnipotence, He swept the uttermost circle of our human need, writing on that far and low horizon His wonderful name, "Mighty to Save." And since none are outcasts from His mercy save those who outcast themselves, why should we limit "the Holy One of Israel"? why should we despair of any? Life and hope should be coeval.

Immediately on retiring from the synagogue, Jesus passes out of Capernaum, and along the shore to Bethsaida, and enters, together with James and John, the house of Peter and Andrew (John i. 44). It is a singular coincidence that the Apostle Peter, with whose name the Romish Church takes such liberties, and who is himself the "Rock" on which they rear their huge fabric of priestly assumptions, should be the only Apostle of whose married life we read; for though John afterwards possesses a "home," its only inmate besides, as far as the records show, is the new "mother" he leads away from the cross. It is true we have not the name of Peter's wife, but we find her shadow, as well as that of her husband, thrown across the pages of the New Testament; cleaving to her mother even while she follows another; ministering to Jesus, and for a time finding Him a home; while later we see her sharing the privations and the perils of her husband's wandering life (1 Cor. ix. 5). Verily, Rome has drifted far from the "Rock" of her anchorage, the example of

her patron saint; and between the Vatican of the modern Pontiff and the sweet domesticities of Bethsaida is a gulf of divergence which only a powerful imagination can cross.

No sooner, however, has Jesus entered the house than He is told how Peter's mother-in-law has been suddenly stricken down by a violent fever, probably a local fever for which that lake-shore was notorious, and which was bred from the malaria of the marsh. Our physician-Evangelist does not stay to diagnose the malady, but he speaks of it as "a great fever," thus giving us an idea of its virulence and consequent danger. "And they besought Him for her;" not that He was at all reluctant to grant their request, for the tense of the verb implies that once asking was sufficient; but evidently there was the "beseeching" look and tone of a mingled love and fear. Jesus responds instantly; for can He come fresh from the healing of a stranger, to allow a dread shadow to darken the home and the hearts of His own? Seeking the sick chamber, He bends over the fever-stricken one, and taking her hand in His (Mark i. 31), He speaks some word of command, "rebuking the fever," as St. Luke expresses it. In a moment the fatal fire is quenched, the throbbing heart regains its normal beat, a delicious coolness takes the place of the burning heat, while the fever-flush steals away to make place for the bloom of health. The cure was perfect and instant. The lost strength returned, and "immediately she arose and ministered unto them," preparing, doubtless, the evening meal.

May we not throw the light of this narrative upon one of the questions of the day? Men speak of the reign of law, and the drift of modern scientific thought

is against any interference—even Divine—with the ordinary operations of physical law. As the visible universe is opened up and explored the heavens are crowded back and back, until they seem nothing but a golden mist, some distant dream. Nature's laws are seen to be so uniform, so ruthlessly exact, that certain of those who should be teachers of a higher faith are suggesting the impossibility of any interference with their ordinary operations. "You do but waste your breath," they say, "in asking for any immunities from Nature's penalties, or for any deviation from her fixed rules. They are invariable, inviolate. Be content rather to be conformed, mentally and morally, to God's will." But is prayer to have so restricted an area? is the physical world to be buried so deep in "law" that it shall give no rest to prayer, not even for the sole of her foot? Entire conformity to God's will is, indeed, the highest aim and privilege of life, and he who prays the most seeks most for this; but has God no will in the world of physics, in the realm of matter? Shall we push Him back to the narrow ledge of a primal Genesis? or shall we leave Him chained to that frontier coast, another Prometheus bound? It is well to respect and to honour law, but Nature's laws are complex, manifold. They can form combinations numberless, working different or opposite results. He who searches for "the springs of life" will

> "Reach the law within the law;"

and who can tell whether there is not a law of prayer and faith, thrown by the Unseen Hand across all the warp of created things, binding "the whole round earth" about "the feet of God"? Reason says, "It might be so," and Scripture says, "It is so." Was

Jesus angry when they told Him of the fever-stricken, and they implored His intervention? Did He say, "You mistake My mission. I must not interfere with the course of the fever; it must have its range. If she lives, she lives; and if she dies, she dies; and whether the one or the other, you must be patient, you must be content"? But such were not the words of Jesus, with their latent fatalism. He heard the prayer, and at once granted it, not by annulling Nature's laws, nor even suspending them, but by introducing a higher law. Even though the fever was the result of natural causes, and though it probably might have been prevented, had they but drained the marsh or planted it with the eucalyptus, yet this does not shut out all interventions of Divine mercy. The Divine compassion makes some allowance for our human ignorance, when it is not wilful, and for our human impotence.

The fever "left her, and immediately she rose up and ministered unto them." Yes, and there are fevers of the spirit as well as of the flesh, when the heart is quick and flurried, the brain hot with anxious thought, when the fret and jar of life seem eating our strength away, and our disquiet spirit finds its rest broken by the pressure of some fearful nightmare. And how soon does this soul-fever strike us down! how it unfits us for our ministry of blessing, robbing us of the "heart at leisure from itself," and filling the soul with sad, distressing fears, until our life seems like the helpless, withered leaf, whirled and tossed hither and thither by the wind! For the fever of the body there may not always be relief, but for the fever of the spirit there is a possible and a perfect cure. It is the touch of Jesus. A close personal contact with the

living and loving Christ will rebuke the fever of your heart; it will give to your soul a quietness and restfulness that are Divine; and with the touch of His omnipotence upon you, and with all the elation of conscious strength, you too will arise into a nobler life, a life which will find its supremest joy in ministering unto others, and so ministering unto Him.

Such was the Sabbath in Galilee in which Jesus began His miracles of healing. But if it saw the beginning of His miracles, it did not see their end; for soon as the sun had set, and the Sabbath restraint was over, "all that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him, and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them." A marvellous ending of a marvellous day! Jesus throws out by handfuls His largesse of blessing, health, which is the highest wealth, showing that there is no end to His power, as there is no limit to His love; that His will is supreme over all forces and all laws; that He is, and ever will be, the perfect Saviour, binding up the broken in heart, assuaging all griefs, and healing all wounds!

CHAPTER X.

THE CALLING OF THE FOUR.

WHEN Peter and his companions had the interview with Jesus by the Jordan, and were summoned to follow Him, it was the designation, rather than the appointment, to the Apostleship. They did accompany Him to Cana, and thence to Capernaum; but here their paths diverged for a time, Jesus passing on alone to Nazareth, while the novitiate disciples fall back again into the routine of secular life. Now, however, His mission is fairly inaugurated, and He must attach them permanently to His person. He must lay His hand, where His thoughts have long been, upon the future, making provision for the stability and permanence of His work, that so the kingdom may survive and flourish when the Ascension clouds have made the King Himself invisible.

St. Matthew and St. Mark insert their abridged narrative of the call before the healing of the demoniac and the cure of Peter's mother-in-law; and most expositors think that St. Luke's setting "in order," in this case at least, is wrong; that he has preferred to have a chronological inaccuracy, so that His miracles may be gathered into related groups. But that our Evangelist is in error is by no means certain; indeed, we are inclined to think that the balance of probability is on the side of his arrangement. How else shall we account

for the crowds who now press upon Jesus so importunately and with such Galilean ardour? It was not the rumour of His Judæan miracles which had awoke this tempest of excitement, for the journey to Jerusalem was not yet taken. And what else could it be, if the miraculous draught of fishes was the first of the Capernaum miracles? But suppose that we retain the order of St. Luke, that the call followed closely upon that memorable Sabbath, then the crowds fall into the story naturally; it is the multitude which had gathered about the door when the Sabbath sun had set, putting an after-glow upon the hills, and on whose sick He wrought His miracles of healing. Nor does the fact that Jesus went to be a guest in Peter's house require us to invert the order of St. Luke; for the casual acquaintance by the Jordan had since ripened into intimacy, so that Peter would naturally offer hospitality to his Master on His coming to Capernaum. Again, too, going back to the Sabbath in the synagogue, we read how they were astonished at His doctrine; "for His word was with authority;" and when that astonishment was heightened into amazement, as they saw the demon cowed and silenced, this was their exclamation, "What a word is this!" And does not Peter refer to this, when the same voice that commanded the demon now commands them to "Let down the nets," and he answers, "At Thy word I will"? It certainly seems as if the "word" of the sea-shore were an echo from the synagogue, and so a "word" that justifies the order of our Evangelist.

It was probably still early in the morning—for the days of Jesus began back at the dawn, and very often before—when He sought the quiet of the sea-shore, possibly to find a still hour for devotion, or perhaps to

see how His friends had fared with their all-night fishing. Little quiet, however, could He find, for from Capernaum and Bethsaida comes a hurrying and intrusive crowd, surging around Him with the swirl and roar of confused voices, and pressing inconveniently near. Not that the crowd was hostile; it was a friendly but inquisitive multitude, eager, not so much to see a repetition of His miracles, as to hear Him speak, in those rare, sweet accents, "the word of God." The expression characterizes the whole teaching of Jesus. Though His words were meant for earth, for human ears and for human hearts, there was no earthliness about them. On the topics in which man is most exercised and garrulous, such as local or national events, Jesus is strangely silent. He scarcely gives them a passing thought; for what were the events of the day to Him who was "before Abraham," and who saw the two eternities? what to Him was the gossip of the hour, how Rome's armies marched and fought, or how "the dogs of faction" bayed? To His mind these were but as dust caught in the eddies of the wind. The thoughts of Jesus were high. Like the figures of the prophet's vision, they had feet indeed, so that they could alight and rest awhile on earthly things—though even here they only touched earth at points which were common to humanity, and they were winged, too, having the sweep of the lower spaces and of the highest heavens. And so there was a heavenliness upon the words of Jesus, and a sweetness, as if celestial harmonies were imprisoned within them. They set men looking upwards, and listening; for the heavens seemed nearer as He spoke, and they were no longer dumb. And not only did the words of Jesus bring to men a clearer revelation of God, correcting the hard views which man,

in his fears and his sins, had formed of Him, but men felt the Divineness of His speech; that Jesus was the Bearer of a new evangel, God's latest message of hope and love. And He *was* the Bearer of such a message, He was Himself that Evangel, the Word of God incarnate, that men might hear of heavenly things in the common accents of earthly speech.

Nor was Jesus loth to deliver His message; He needed no constraining to speak of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Only let Him see the listening heart, the void of a sincere longing, and His speech distilled as the dew. And so no time was to Him inopportune; the break of day, the noon, the night were all alike to Him. No place was out of harmony with His message—the Temple-court, the synagogue, the domestic hearth, the mountain, the lake-shore; He consecrated all alike with the music of His speech. Nay, even upon the cross, amid its agonies, He opens His lips once more, though parched with terrible thirst, to speak peace within a penitent soul, and to open for it the gate of Paradise.

Drawn up on the shore, close by the water's edge, are two boats, empty now, for Simon and his partners are busy washing their nets, after their night of fruitless toil. Seeking for freer space than the pushing crowd will allow Him, and also wanting a point of vantage, where His voice will command a wider range of listeners, Jesus gets into Simon's boat, and requests him to put out a little from the land. "And He sat down, and taught the multitudes out of the boat," assuming the posture of the teacher, even though the occasion partook so largely of the impromptu character. When He dispensed the material bread He made the multitudes "sit down;" but when He dispensed the

living bread, the heavenly manna, He left the multitudes standing, while He Himself sat down, so claiming the authority of a Master, as His posture emphasized His words. It is somewhat singular that when our Evangelist has been so careful and minute in his description of the scene, giving us a sort of photograph of that lake-side group, with bits of artistic colouring thrown in, that then he should omit entirely the subject-matter of the discourse. But so he does, and we try in vain to fill up the blank. Did He, as at Nazareth, turn the lamps of prophecy full upon Himself, and tell them how the "great Light" had at last risen upon Galilee of the nations? or did He let His speech reflect the shimmer of the lake, as He told in parable how the kingdom of heaven was "like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind"? Possibly He did, but His words, whatever they were, "like the pipes of Pan, died with the ears and hearts of those who heard them."

"When He had left speaking," having dismissed the multitude with His benediction, He turns to give to His future disciples, Peter and Andrew, a private lesson. "Put out into the deep," He said, including Andrew now in His plural imperative, "and let down your nets for a draught." It was a commanding voice, altogether different in its tone from the last words He addressed to Peter, when He "requested" him to put out a little from the land. Then He spoke as the Friend, possibly the Guest, with a certain amount of deference; now He steps up to a very throne of power, a throne which in Peter's life He never more abdicates. Simon recognizes the altered conditions, that a Higher Will is now in the boat, where hitherto his own will has been supreme; and saluting Him as "Master," he says, "We toiled all

night, and took nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the nets." He does not demur; he does not hesitate one moment. Though himself weary with his night-long labours, and though the command of the Master went directly against his nautical experiences, he sinks his thoughts and his doubts in the word of his Lord. It is true he speaks of the failure of the night, how they have taken nothing; but instead of making that a plea for hesitancy and doubt, it is the foil to make his unquestioning faith stand out in bolder relief. Peter was the man of impulse, the man of action, with a swift-beating heart and an ever-ready hand. To his forward-stepping mind decision was easy and immediate; and so, almost before the command was completed, his swift lips had made answer, "I will let down the nets." It was the language of a prompt and full obedience. It showed that Simon's nature was responsive and genuine, that when a Christly word struck upon his soul it set his whole being vibrating, and drove out all meaner thoughts. He had learned to obey, which was the first lesson of discipleship; and having learned to obey, he was therefore fit to rule, qualified for leadership, and worthy of being entrusted with the keys of the kingdom.

And how much is missed in life through feebleness of resolve, a lack of decision! How many are the invertebrate souls, lacking in will and void of purpose, who, instead of piercing waves and conquering the flow of adverse tides, like the medusæ, can only drift, all limp and languid, in the current of circumstance! Such men do not make apostles; they are but ciphers of flesh and blood, of no value by themselves, and only of any worth as they are attached to the unit of some stronger will. A poor broken thing is a life spent

in the subjunctive mood, among the "mights" and "shoulds," where the "I will" waits upon "I would"! That is the truest, worthiest life that is divided between the indicative and the imperative. As in shaking pebbles the smaller ones drop down to the bottom, their place determined by their size, so in the shaking together of human lives, in the rub and jostle of the world, the strong wills invariably come to the top.

And how much do even Christians lose, through their partial or their slow obedience! How we hesitate and question, when our duty is simply to obey! How we cling to our own ways, modes, and wills, when the Christ is commanding us forward to some higher service! How strangely we forget that in the grammar of life the "Thou willest" should be the first person, and the "I will" a far-off second! When the soldier hears the word of command he becomes deaf to all other voices, even the voice of danger, or the voice of death itself; and when Christ speaks to us His word should completely fill the soul, leaving no room for hesitancy, no place for doubt. Said the mother to the servants of Cana, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." That "whatsoever" is the line of duty, and the line of beauty too. He who makes Christ's will his will, who does implicitly "whatsoever He saith," will find a Cana anywhere, where life's water turns to wine, and where life's common things are exalted into sacraments. He who walks up to the light will surely walk in the light.

We can imagine with what alacrity Simon obeys the Master's word, and how the disappointment of the night and all sense of fatigue are lost in the exhilaration of the new hopes. Seconded by the more quiet Andrew, who catches the enthusiasm of his brother's faith, he

pulls out into deep water, where they let down the nets. Immediately they enclosed "a great multitude" of fishes, a weight altogether beyond their power to lift; and as they saw the nets beginning to give way with the strain, Peter "beckoned" to his partners, James and John, whose boat, probably, was still drawn up on the shore. Coming to their assistance, together they secured the spoil, completely filling the two boats, until they were in danger of sinking with the overweight.

Here, then, we find a miracle of a new order. Hitherto, in the narrative of our Evangelist, Jesus has shown His supernatural power only in connection with humanity, driving away the ills and diseases which preyed upon the human body and the human soul. And not even here did Jesus make use of that power randomly, making it common and cheap; it was called forth by the constraint of a great need and a great desire. Now, however, there is neither the desire nor the need. It was not the first time, nor was it to be the last, that Peter and Andrew had spent a night in fruitless toil. That was a lesson they had early to learn, and which they were never allowed long to forget. They had been quite content to leave their boat, as indeed they had intended, on the sands, until the evening should recall them to their task. But Jesus volunteers His help, and works a miracle—whether of omnipotence, or omniscience, or of both, it matters not, and not either to relieve some present distress, or to still some pain, but that He might fill the empty boats with fishes. We must not, however, assess the value of the miracle at the market-price of the take, for evidently Jesus had some ulterior motive and design. As the leaden types, lying detached and meaningless in the "case," can

be arranged into words and be made to voice the very highest thought, so these boats and oars, nets and fish are but so many characters, the Divine "code" as we may call it, spelling out, first to these fishermen, and then to mankind in general, the deep thought and purpose of Christ. Can we discover that meaning? We think we may.

In the first place, the miracle shows us the supremacy of Christ. We may almost read the Divineness of Christ's mission in the manner of its manifestation. Had Jesus been man only, His thoughts running on human lines, and His plans built after human models, He would have arranged for another Epiphany at the beginning of His ministry, showing His credentials at the first, and announcing in full the purpose of His mission. That would have been the way of man, fond as he is of surprises and sudden transitions; but such is not the way of God. The forces of heaven do not move forward in leaps and somersaults; their advances are gradual and rhythmic. Evolution, and not revolution, is the Divine law, in the realm of matter and of mind alike. The dawn must precede the day. And just so the life of the Divine Son is manifested. He who is the "Light of the world" comes into that world softly as a sunrise, lighting up little by little the horizon of His disciples' thought, lest a revelation which was too full and too sudden should only dazzle and blind them. So far they have seen Him exercise His power over diseases and demons, or, as at Cana, over inorganic matter; now they see that power moving out in new directions. Jesus sets up His throne to face the sea, the sea with which they were so familiar, and over which they claimed some sort of lordship. But even here, upon their own element, Jesus is su-

preme. He sees what they do not; He knows these deeps, filling up with His omniscience the blanks they seek to fill with their random guesses. Here, hitherto, their wills have been all-powerful; they could take their boats and cast their nets just when and where they would; but now they feel the touch of a Higher Will, and Christ's word fills their hearts, impelling them onward, even as their boats were driven of the wind. Jesus now assumes the command. His Will, like a magnet, attracts to itself and controls their lesser wills; and as His word now launches out the boat and casts the nets, so shortly, at that same "word," will boats and nets, and the sea itself, be left behind.

And did not that Divine Will move beneath the water as well as above it, controlling the movements of the shoal of fishes, as on the surface it was controlling the thoughts and moving the hands of the fishermen? It is true that in Gennesaret, as in our modern seas, the fish sometimes moved in such dense shoals that an enormous "take" would be an event purely natural, a wonder indeed, but no miracle. Possibly it was so here, in which case the narrative would resolve itself into a miracle of omniscience, as Jesus saw, what even the trained eyes of the fishermen had not seen, the movements of the shoal, then regulating His commands, so making the oars above and the fins below strike the water in unison. But was this all? Evidently not, to Peter's mind, at any rate. Had it been all to him, a purely natural phenomenon, or had he seen in it only the prescience of Christ, a vision somewhat clearer and farther than his own, it would not have created such feelings of surprise and awe. He might still have wondered, but he scarcely would have worshipped. But Peter feels himself in the pre-

sence of a Power that knows no limit, One who has supreme authority over diseases and demons, and who now commands even the fishes of the sea. In this sudden wealth of spoil he reads the majesty and glory of the new-found Christ, whose word, spoken or unspoken, is omnipotent, alike in the heights above and in the depths beneath. And so the moment his thoughts are disengaged from the pressing task he prostrates himself at the feet of Jesus, crying with awe-stricken speech, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" We are not, perhaps, to interpret this literally, for Peter's lips were apt to become tremulous with the excitement of the moment, and to say words which in a cooler mood he would recall, or at least modify. So here, it surely was not his meaning that "the Lord," as he now calls Jesus, should leave him; for how indeed should He depart, now that they are afloat upon the deep, far from land? But such had been the revelation of the power and holiness of Jesus, borne in by the miracle upon Peter's soul, that he felt himself thrown back, morally and in every way, to an infinite distance from Christ. His boat was unworthy to carry, as the house of the centurion was unworthy to receive, such infinite perfections as now he saw in Jesus. It was an apocalypse indeed, revealing, together with the purity and power of Christ, the littleness, the nothingness of his sinful self; that, as Elijah covered his face when the LORD passed by, so Peter feels as if he ought to draw the veil of an infinite distance around himself—the distance which would ever be between him and the LORD, were not His mercy and His love just as infinite as His power.

The fuller meaning of the miracle, however, becomes apparent when we interpret it in the light of the call

which immediately followed. Reading the sudden fear which has come over Peter's soul, and which has thrown his speech somewhat into confusion, Jesus first stills the agitation of his heart by a word of assurance and of cheer. "Fear not," He says, for "from henceforth thou shalt catch men." It will be observed that St. Luke puts the commission of Christ in the singular number, as addressed to Peter alone, while St. Matthew and St. Mark put it in the plural, as including Andrew as well: "I will make *you* to become fishers of men." The difference, however, is but immaterial, and possibly the reason why St. Luke introduces the Apostle Peter with such a frequent nomination—for "Simon" is a familiar name in these early chapters—making his call so emphatic and prominent, was because in the partisan times which came but too early in the Church the Gentile Christians, for whom our Evangelist is writing, might think unworthily and speak disparagingly of him who was the Apostle of the Circumcision. Be this as it may, Simon and Andrew are now summoned to, and commissioned for, a higher service. That "henceforth" strikes across their life like a high watershed, severing the old from the new, their future from their past, and throwing all the currents of their thoughts and plans into different and opposite directions. They are to be "fishers of men," and Jesus, who so delights in giving object-lessons to His disciples, uses the miracle as a sort of background, on which He may write their commission in large and lasting characters; it is the Divine seal upon their credentials.

Not that they understood the full purport of His words at once. The phrase "fishers of men" was one of those seed-thoughts which needed pondering in the

heart; it would gradually unfold itself in the after-months of discipleship, ripening at last in the summer heat and summer light of the Pentecost. They were now to be fishers of the higher art, their quest the souls of men. This must now be the one object, the supreme aim of their life, a life now ennobled by a higher call. Plans, journeys, thoughts, and words, all must bear the stamp of their great commission, which is to "catch men," not unto death, however, as the fish expire when taken from their native element, but unto life—for such is the meaning of the word. And to "take them alive" is to save them; it is to take them out of an element which stifles and destroys, and to draw them, by the constraints of truth and love, within the kingdom of heaven, which kingdom is righteousness and life, even eternal life.

But if the full meaning of the Master's words grows upon them—an aftermath to be harvested in later months—enough is understood to make the line of present duty plain. That "henceforth" is clear, sharp, and imperative. It leaves room neither for excuse nor postponement. And so immediately, "when they had brought their boats to land, they left all and followed Him," to learn by following how they too might be winners of souls, and in a lesser, lower sense, saviours of men.

The story of St. Luke closes somewhat abruptly, with no further reference to Simon's partners; and having "beckoned" them into his central scene, and filled their boat, then, as in a dissolving-view, the pen of our Evangelist draws around them the haze of silence, and they disappear. The other Synoptists, however, fill up the blank, telling how Jesus came to them, probably later in the day, for they were mending

the nets, which had been tangled and somewhat torn with the weight of spoil they had just taken. Speaking no word of explanation, and giving no word of promise, He simply says, with that commanding voice of His, "Follow Me," thus putting Himself above all associations and all relationships, as Leader and Lord. James and John recognize the call, for which doubtless they had been prepared, as being for themselves alone, and instantly leaving the father, the "hired servants," and the half-mended nets, and breaking utterly with their past, they follow Jesus, giving to Him, with the exception of one dark, hesitating hour, a life-long devotion. And forsaking all, the four disciples found all. They exchanged a dead self for a living Christ, earth for heaven. Following the Lord fully, with no side-glances at self or selfish gain—at any rate after the enduement and the enlightenment of Pentecost—they found in the presence and friendship of the Lord the "hundredfold" in the present life. Allying themselves with Christ, they too rose with the rising Sun. Obscure fishermen, they wrote their names among the immortals as the first Apostles of the new faith, bearers of the "keys" of the kingdom. Following Christ, they led the world; and as the Light that rose over Galilee of the nations becomes ever more intense and bright, so it makes ever more intense and vivid the shadows of these Galilean fishermen, as it throws them across all lands and times.

And such even now is the truest and noblest life. The life which is "hid with Christ" is the life that shines the farthest and that tells the most. Whether in the more quiet paths and scenes of discipleship or in the more responsible and public duties of the apostolate, Jesus demands of us a true, whole-souled, and

life-long devotion. And, here indeed, the paradox is true, for by losing life we find it, even the life more abundant; for

> "Men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things."

Nay, they may attain to the highest things, even to the highest heavens.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCERNING PRAYER.

WHEN the Greeks called man ὁ ἄνθρωπος, or the "uplooking one," they did but crystallize in a word what is a universal fact, the religious instinct of humanity. Everywhere, and through all times, man has felt, as by a sort of intuition, that earth was no Ultima Thule, with nothing beyond but oceans of vacancy and silence, but that it lay in the over-shadow of other worlds, between which and their own were subtle modes of correspondence. They felt themselves to be in the presence of Powers other and higher than human, who somehow influenced their destiny, whose favour they must win, and whose displeasure they must avert. And so Paganism reared her altars, almost numberless, dedicating them even to the "Unknown God," lest some anonymous deity should be grieved at being omitted from the enumeration. The prevalence of false religions in the world, the garrulous babble of mythology, does but voice the religious instinct of man; it is but another Tower of Babel, by which men hope to find and to scale the heavens which must be somewhere overhead.

In the Old Testament, however, we find the clearer revelation. What to the unaided eye of reason and of nature seemed but a wave of golden mist athwart the

sky—"a meeting of gentle lights without a name"—now becomes a wide-reaching and shining realm, peopled with intelligences of divers ranks and orders; while in the centre of all is the city and the throne of the Invisible King, Jehovah, Lord of Sabaoth. In the breath of the new morning the gossamer threads Polytheism had been spinning through the night were swept away, and on the pillars of the New Jerusalem, that celestial city of which their own Salem was a far-off and broken type, they read the inscription, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord." But while the Old Testament revealed the unity of the Godhead, it emphasized especially His sovereignty, the glories of His holiness, and the thunders of His power. He is the great Creator, arranging His universe, commanding evolutions and revolutions, and giving to each molecule of matter its secret affinities and repulsions. And again He is the Lawgiver, the great Judge, speaking out of the cloudy pillar and the windy tempest, dividing the firmaments of Right and Wrong, whose holiness hates sin with an infinite hatred, and whose justice, with sword of flame, pursues the wrong-doer like an unforgetting Nemesis. It is only natural, therefore, that with such conceptions of God, the heavens should appear distant and somewhat cold. The quiet that was upon the world was the hush of awe, of fear, rather than of love; for while the goodness of God was a familiar and favourite theme, and while the mercy of God, which "endureth for ever," was the refrain, oft repeated, of their loftiest songs, the love of God was a height the Old Dispensation had not explored, and the Fatherhood of God, that new world of perpetual summer, lay all undiscovered, or but dimly apprehended through the mist. The Divine love and the Divine Fatherhood

were truths which seemed to be held in reserve for the New Dispensation; and as the light needs the subtle and sympathetic ether before it can reach our outlying world, so the love and the Fatherhood of God are borne in upon us by Him who was Himself the Divine Son and the incarnation of the Divine love.

It is just here where the teaching of Jesus concerning prayer begins. He does not seek to explain its philosophy; He does not give hints as to any observance of time or place; but leaving these questions to adjust themselves, He seeks to bring heaven into closer touch with earth. And how can He do this so well as by revealing the Fatherhood of God? When the electric wire linked the New with the Old World the distances were annihilated, the thousand leagues of sea were as if they were not; and when Jesus threw across, between earth and heaven, that word "Father," the wide distances vanished, and even the silences became vocal. In the Psalms, those loftiest utterances of devotion, Religion only once ventured to call God "Father;" and then, as if frightened at her own temerity, she lapses into silence, and never speaks the familiar word again. But how different the language of the Gospels! It is a name that Jesus is never weary of repeating, striking its music upwards of seventy times, as if by the frequent iteration He would lodge the heavenly word deep within the world's heart. This is His first lesson in the science of prayer: He drills them on the Divine Fatherhood, setting them on that word, as it were, to practise the scales; for as he who has practised well the scales has acquired the key to all harmonies, so he who has learned well the "Father" has learned the secret of heaven, the sesame that opens all its doors and unlocks all its treasures.

"When ye pray," said Jesus, replying to a disciple who sought instruction in the heavenly language, "say, Father," thus giving us what was His own pass-word to the courts of heaven. It is as if He said, "If you would pray acceptably put yourself in the right position. Seek to realize, and then to claim, your true relationship. Do not look upon God as a distant and cold abstraction, or as some blind force; do not regard Him as being hostile to you or as careless about you. Else your prayer will be some wail of bitterness, a cry coming out of the dark, and losing itself in the dark again. But look upon God as your Father, your living, loving, heavenly Father; and then step up with a holy boldness into the child-place, and all heaven opens before you there."

And not only does Jesus thus "show us the Father," but He takes pains to show us that it is a real, and not some fictitious Fatherhood. He tells us that the word means far more in its heavenly than in its earthly use; that the earthly meaning, in fact, is but a shadow of the heavenly. For "if ye then," He says, "being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" He thus sets us a problem in Divine proportion. He gives us the human fatherhood, with all it implies, as our known quantities, and from these He leaves us to work out the unknown quantity, which is the Divine ability and willingness to give good gifts to men; for the Holy Spirit includes in Himself all spiritual gifts. It is a problem, however, which our earthly figures cannot solve. The nearest that we can approach to the answer is that the Divine Fatherhood is the human fatherhood multiplied by that "how much more"—a factor which gives us an infinite series.

Again, Jesus teaches that character is an important condition of prayer, and that in this realm heart is more than any art. Words alone do not constitute prayer, for they may be only like the bubbles of the children's play, iridescent but hollow, never climbing the sky, but returning to the earth whence they came. And so when the scribes and Pharisees make "long prayers," striking devotional attitudes, and putting on airs of sanctity, Jesus could not endure them. They were a weariness and abomination to Him; for He read their secret heart, and found it vain and proud. In His parable (xviii. 11) He puts the genuine and the counterfeit prayer side by side, drawing the sharp contrast between them. He gives us that of the Pharisee, wordy, inflated, full of the self-eulogizing "I." It is the prayerless prayer, that had no need, and which was simply an incense burned before the clayey image of himself. Then He gives us the few brief words of the publican, the cry of a broken heart, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," a prayer which reached directly the highest heaven, and which came back freighted with the peace of God. "If I regard iniquity in my heart," the Psalmist said, "the Lord will not hear me." And it is true. If there be the least unforgiven sin within the soul we spread forth our hands, we make many prayers, in vain; we do but utter "wild, delirious cries" that Heaven will not hear, or at any rate regard. The first cry of true prayer is the cry for mercy, pardon; and until this is spoken, until we step up by faith into the child-position, we do but offer vain oblations. Nay, even in the regenerate heart, if there be a temporary lapse, and unholy tempers brood within, the lips of prayer become paralyzed at once, or they only stammer in incoherent speech. We may with

filled hands compass the altar of God, but neither gifts nor prayers can be accepted if there be bitterness and jealousy within, or if our "brother has aught against" us. The wrong must be righted with our brother, or we cannot be right with God. How can we ask for forgiveness if we ourselves cannot forgive? How can we ask for mercy if we are hard and merciless, gripping the throat of each offender, as we demand the uttermost farthing? He who can pray for them who despitefully use him is in the way of the Divine commandment; he has climbed to the dome of the temple, where the whispers of prayer, and even its inarticulate aspirations, are heard in heaven. And so the connection is most close and constant between praying and living, and they pray most and best who at the same time "make their life a prayer."

Again, Jesus maps out for us the realm of prayer, showing the wide areas it should cover. St. Luke gives us an abbreviated form of the prayer recorded by St. Matthew, and which we call the "Lord's Prayer." It is a disputed point, though not a material one, whether the two prayers are but varied renderings of one and the same utterance, or whether Jesus gave, on a later occasion, an epitomized form of the prayer He had prescribed before, though from the circumstantial evidence of St. Luke we incline to the latter view. The two forms, however, are identical in substance. It is scarcely likely that Jesus intended it to be a rigid formula, to which we should be slavishly bound; for the varied renderings of the two Evangelists show plainly that Heaven does not lay stress upon the *ipsissima verba*. We must take it rather as a Divine model, laying down the lines on which our prayers should move. It is, in fact, a sort of prayer-

microcosm, giving a miniature reflection of the whole world of prayer, as a drop of dew will give a reflection of the encircling sky. It gives us what we may call the *species* of prayer, whose *genera* branch off into infinite varieties; nor can we readily conceive of any petition, however particular or private, whose root-stem is not found in the few but comprehensive words of the Lord's Prayer. It covers every want of man, just as it befits every place and time.

Running through the prayer are two marked divisions, the one general, the other particular and personal; and in the Divine order, contrary to our human wont, the general stands first, and the personal second. Our prayers often move in narrow circles, like the homing birds coming back to this "centred self" of ours, and sometimes we forget to give them the wider sweeps over a redeemed humanity. But Jesus says, "When ye pray, say, Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come." It is a temporary erasure of self, as the soul of the worshipper is absorbed in God. In its nearness to the throne it forgets for awhile its own little needs; its low-flying thoughts are caught up into the higher currents of the Divine thought and purpose, moving outwards with them. And this is the first petition, that the name of God may be hallowed throughout the world; that is, that men's conceptions of the Deity may become just and holy, until earth gives back in echo the *Trisagion* of the seraphim. The second petition is a continuation of the first; for just in proportion as men's conceptions of God are corrected and hallowed will the kingdom of God be set up on earth. The first petition, like that of the Psalmist, is for the sending out of "Thy light and Thy truth;" the second is that humanity may

be led to the "holy hill," praising God upon the harp, and finding in God their "exceeding joy." To find God as the Father-King is to step up within the kingdom.

The prayer now descends into the lower plane of personal wants, covering (1) our physical, and (2) our spiritual needs. The former are met with one petition, "Give us day by day our daily bread," a sentence confessedly obscure, and which has given rise to much dispute. Some interpret it in a spiritual sense alone, since, as they say, any other interpretation would break in upon the uniformity of the prayer, whose other terms are all spiritual. But if, as we have suggested, the whole prayer must be regarded as an epitome of prayer in general, then it must include somewhere our physical needs, or a large and important domain of our life is left uncovered. As to the meaning of the singular adjective ἐπιούσιον we need not say much. That it can scarcely mean "to-morrow's" bread is evident from the warning Jesus gives against "taking thought" for the morrow, and we must not allow the prayer to traverse the command. The most natural and likely interpretation is that which the heart of mankind has always given it, as our "daily" bread, or bread sufficient for the day. Jesus thus selects what is the most common of our physical wants, the bread which comes to us in such purely natural, matter-of-course ways, as the specimen need of our physical life. But when He thus lifts up this common, ever-recurring mercy into the region of prayer He puts a halo of Divineness about it, and by including this He teaches us that there is no want of even our physical life which is excluded from the realm of prayer. If we are invited to speak with God concerning our

daily bread, then certainly we need not be silent as to aught else.

Our spiritual needs are included in the two petitions, "And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation." The parenthesis does not imply that all debts should be remitted, for payment of these is enjoined as one of the duties of life. The indebtedness spoken of is rather the New Testament indebtedness, the failure of duty or courtesy, the omission of some "ought" of life or some injury or offence. It is that human forgiveness, the opposite of resentment, which grows up under the shadow of the Divine forgiveness. The former of these petitions, then, is for the forgiveness of all past sin, while the latter is for deliverance from present sinning; for when we pray, "Bring us not into temptation," it is a prayer that we may not be tempted "above that we are able," which, amplified, means that in all our temptations we may be victorious, "kept by the power of God."

Such, then, is the wide realm of prayer, as indicated by Jesus. He assures us that there is no department of our being, no circumstance of our life, which does not lie within its range; that

> "The whole round world is every way
> Bound with gold chains about the feet of God,"

and that on these golden chains, as on a harp, the touch of prayer may wake sweet music, far-off or near alike. And how much we miss through restraining prayer, reserving it for special occasions, or for the greater crises of life! But if we would only loop up with heaven each successive hour, if we would only run the thread of prayer through the common events

and the common tasks, we should find the whole day and the whole life swinging on a higher, calmer level. The common task would cease to be common, and the earthly would be less earthly, if we only threw a bit of heaven upon it, or we opened it out to heaven. If in everything we could but make our requests known unto God—that is, if prayer became the habitual act of life—we should find that heaven was no longer the land "afar off," but that it was close upon us, with all its proffered ministries.

Again, Jesus teaches the importance of earnestness and importunity in prayer. He sketches the picture—for it is scarcely a parable—of the man whose hospitality is claimed, late at night, by a passing friend, but who has no provision made for the emergency. He goes over to another friend, and rousing him up at midnight, he asks for the loan of three loaves. And with what result? Does the man answer from within, "Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee"? No, that would be an impossible answer; for "though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth" (xi. 8). It is the unreasonableness, or at any rate the untimeliness of the request Jesus seems to emphasize. The man himself is thoughtless, improvident in his household management. He disturbs his neighbour, waking up his whole family at midnight for such a trivial matter as the loan of three loaves. But he gains his request, not, either, on the ground of friendship, but through sheer audacity, impudence; for such is the meaning of the word, rather than importunity. The lesson is easily learned, for the suppressed comparison would

be, "If man, being evil, will put himself out of the way to serve a friend, even at this untimely hour, filling up by his thoughtfulness his friend's lack of thought, how much more will the heavenly Father give to His child such things as are needful?"

We have the same lesson taught in the parable of the Unjust Judge (xviii. 1), that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Here, however, the characters are reversed. The suppliant is a poor and a wronged widow, while the person addressed is a hard, selfish, godless man, who boasts of his atheism. She asks, not for a favour, but for her rights—that she may have due protection from some extortionate adversary, who somehow has got her in his power; for justice rather than vengeance is her demand. But "he would not for awhile," and all her cries for pity and for help beat upon that callous heart only as the surf upon a rocky shore, to be thrown back upon itself. But afterwards he said within himself, "Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming." And so he is moved to take her part against her adversary, not for any motive of compassion or sense of justice, but through mere selfishness, that he may escape the annoyance of her frequent visits—lest her continual coming "worry" me, as the colloquial expression might be rendered. Here the comparison, or contrast rather, is expressed, at any rate in part. It is, "If an unjust and abandoned judge grants a just petition at last, out of base motives, when it is often urged, to a defenceless person for whom he cares nothing, how much more shall a just and merciful God hear the cry and avenge the cause of those whom He loves?" *

* Farrar.

It is a resolute persistence in prayer the parable urges, the continued asking, and seeking, and knocking that Jesus both commended and commanded (xi. 9), and which has the promise of such certain answers, and not the tantalizing mockeries of stones for bread, or scorpions for fish. Some blessings lie near at hand; we have only to ask, and we receive—receive even while we ask. But other blessings lie farther off, and they can only be ours by a continuance in prayer, by a persistent importunity. Not that our heavenly Father needs any wearying into mercy; but the blessing may not be ripe, or we ourselves may not be fully prepared to receive it. A blessing for which we are unprepared would only be an untimely blessing, and like a December swallow, it would soon die, without nest or brood. And sometimes the long delay is but a test of faith, whetting and sharpening the desire, until our very life seems to depend upon the granting of our prayer. So long as our prayers are among the "may-be's" and "mights" there are fears and doubts alternating with our hope and faith. But when the desires are intensified, and our prayers rise into the "must-be's," then the answers are near at hand; for that "must be" is the soul's Mahanaim, where the angels meet us, and God Himself says "I will." Delays in our prayers are by no means denials; they are often but the lengthened summer for the ripening of our blessings, making them larger and more sweet.

And now we have only to consider, which we must do briefly, the practice of Jesus, the place of prayer in His own life; and we shall find that in every point it coincides exactly with His teaching. To us of the clouded vision heaven is sometimes a hope more than a reality. It is an unseen goal, luring us across the

wilderness, and which one of these days we may possess; but it is not to us as the wide-reaching, encircling sky, throwing its sunshine into each day, and lighting up our nights with its thousand lamps. To Jesus, heaven was more and nearer than it is to us. He had left it behind; and yet He had not left it, for He speaks of Himself, the Son of man, as being now in heaven. And so He was. His feet were upon earth, at home amid its dust; but His heart, His truer life, were all above. And how constant His correspondence, or rather communion, with heaven! At first sight it appears strange to us that Jesus should need the sustenance of prayer, or that He could even adopt its language. But when He became the Son of man He voluntarily assumed the needs of humanity; He "emptied Himself," as the Apostle expresses a great mystery, as if for the time divesting Himself of all Divine prerogatives, choosing to live as man amongst men. And so Jesus prayed. He was wont, even as we are, to refresh a wasted strength by draughts from the celestial springs; and as Antæus, in his wrestling, recovered himself as he touched the ground, so we find Jesus, in the great crises of His life, falling back upon Heaven.

St. Luke, in his narrative of the Baptism, inserts one fact the other Synoptists omit—that Jesus was in the act of prayer when the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended, in the semblance of a dove, upon Him. It is as if the opened heavens, the descending dove, and the audible voice were but the answer to His prayer. And why not? Standing on the threshold of His mission, would He not naturally ask that a double portion of the Spirit might be His—that Heaven might put its manifest seal upon that mission, if not for the

confirmation of His own faith, yet for that of His forerunner? At any rate, the fact is plain that it was while He was in the act of prayer that He received that second and higher baptism, even the baptism of the Spirit.

A second epoch in that Divine life was when Jesus formally instituted the Apostleship, calling and initiating the Twelve into the closer brotherhood. It was, so to speak, the appointment of a regency, who should exercise authority and rule in the new kingdom, sitting,as Jesus figuratively expresses it (xxii. 30), "on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." It is easy to see what tremendous issues were involved in this appointment; for were these foundation-stones untrue, warped by jealousies and vain ambitions, the whole superstructure would have been weakened, thrown out of the square. And so before the selection is made, a selection demanding such insight and foresight, such a balancing of complementary gifts, Jesus devotes the whole night to prayer, seeking the solitude of the mountain-height, and in the early dawn coming down, with the dews of night upon His garment and with the dews of heaven upon His soul, which, like crystals or lenses of light, made the invisible visible and the distant near.

A third crisis in that Divine life was at the Transfiguration, when the summit was reached, the borderline between earth and heaven, where, amid celestial greetings and overshadowing clouds of glory, that sinless life would have had its natural transition into heaven. And here again we find the same coincidence of prayer. Both St. Mark and St. Luke state that the "high mountain" was climbed for the express purpose of communion with Heaven; they "went up into the

mountain to pray." It is only St. Luke, however, who states that it was "as He was praying" the fashion of His countenance was altered, thus making the vision an answer, or at least a corollary, to the prayer. He is at a point where two ways meet: the one passes into heaven at once, from that high level to which by a sinless life He has attained; the other path sweeps suddenly downward to a valley of agony, a cross of shame, a tomb of death; and after this wide *détour* the heavenly heights are reached again. Which path will He choose? If He takes the one He passes solitary into heaven; if He takes the other He brings with Him a redeemed humanity. And does not this give us, in a sort of echo, the burden of His prayer? He finds the shadow of the cross thrown over this heaven-lighted summit—for when Moses and Elias appear they would not introduce a subject altogether new; they would in their conversation strike in with the theme with which His mind is already preoccupied, that is the decease He should accomplish at Jerusalem—and as the chill of that shadow settles upon Him, causing the flesh to shrink and quiver for a while, would He not seek for the strength He needs? Would He not ask, as later, in the garden, that the cup might pass from Him; or if that should not be possible, that His will might not conflict with the Father's will, even for a passing moment? At any rate we may suppose that the vision was, in some way, Heaven's answer to His prayer, giving Him the solace and strengthening that He sought, as the Father's voice attested His Sonship, and celestials came forth to salute the Well-beloved, and to hearten Him on towards His dark goal.

Just so was it when Jesus kept His fourth watch in Gethsemane. What Gethsemane was, and what

its fearful agony meant, we shall consider in a later chapter. It is enough for our present purpose to see how Jesus consecrated that deep valley, as before He had consecrated the Transfiguration height, to prayer. Leaving the three outside the veil of the darkness, He passes into Gethsemane, as into another Holy of holies, there to offer up for His own and for Himself the sacrifice of prayer; while as our High Priest He sprinkles with His own blood, that blood of the everlasting covenant, the sacred ground. And what prayer was that! how intensely fervent! That if it were possible the dread cup might pass from Him, but that either way the Father's will might be done! And that prayer was the prelude to victory; for as the first Adam fell by the assertion of self, the clashing of his will with God's, the second Adam conquers by the total surrender of His will to the will of the Father. The agony was lost in the acquiescence.

But it was not alone in the great crises of His life that Jesus fell back upon Heaven. Prayer with Him was habitual, the fragrant atmosphere in which He lived, and moved, and spoke. His words glide as by a natural transition into its language, as a bird whose feet have lightly touched the ground suddenly takes to its wings; and again and again we find Him pausing in the weaving of His speech, to throw across the earthward warp the heavenward woof of prayer. It was a necessity of His life; and if the intrusive crowds allowed Him no time for its exercise, He was wont to elude them, to find upon the mountain or in the desert His prayer-chamber beneath the stars. And how frequently we read of His "looking up to heaven" amid the pauses of His daily task! stopping before He breaks the bread, and on the mirror of His upturned

glance leading the thoughts and thanks of the multitude to the All-Father, who giveth to all His creatures their meat in due season; or pausing as He works some impromptu miracle, before speaking the omnipotent "Ephphatha," that on His upward look He may signal to the skies! And what a light is turned upon His life and His relation to His disciples by a simple incident that occurs on the night of the betrayal! Reading the sign of the times, in His forecast of the dark to-morrow, He sees the terrible strain that will be put upon Peter's faith, and which He likens to a Satanic sifting. With prescient eye He sees the temporary collapse; how, in the fierce heat of the trial, the "rock" will be thrown into a state of flux; so weak and pliant, it will be all rippled by agitation and unrest, or driven back at the mere breath of a servant-girl. He says mournfully, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not" (xxii. 31). So completely does Jesus identify Himself with His own, making their separate needs His care (for this doubtless was no solitary case); but just as the High Priest carried on his breastplate the twelve tribal names, thus bringing all Israel within the light of Urim and Thummim, so Jesus carries within His heart both the name and the need of each separate disciple, asking for them in prayer what, perhaps, they have failed to ask for themselves. Nor are the prayers of Jesus limited by any such narrow circle; they compassed the world, lighting up all horizons; and even upon the cross, amid the jeers and laughter of the crowd, He forgets His own agonies, as with parched lips He prays for His murderers, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Thus, more than any son of man, did Jesus "pray without ceasing," "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" making request unto God. Shall we not copy His bright example? shall we not, too, live, labour, and endure, as "seeing Him who is invisible"? He who lives a life of prayer will never question its reality. He who sees God in everything, and everything in God, will turn his life into a south land, with upper and nether springs of blessing in ceaseless flow; for the life that lies full heavenward lies in perpetual summer, in the eternal noon.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FAITH OF THE CENTURION.

LUKE vii. 1-10.

OUR Evangelist prefaces the narrative of the healing of the centurion's servant with one of his characteristic time-marks, the shadow upon his dial-plate being the shadow of the new mount of God: "After He had ended all His sayings in the ears of the people, He entered into Capernaum." The language is unusually weighty, almost solemn, as if the Sermon on the Mount were not so much a sermon as a manifesto, the formal proclamation of the kingdom of heaven. Our word "ended," too, is scarcely an equivalent of the original word, whose underlying idea is that of fulness, completion. It is more than a full-stop to point a sentence; it is a word that characterizes the sentence itself, suggesting, if not implying, that these "sayings" of His formed a complete and rounded whole, a body of moral and ethical truth which was perfect in itself. The Mount of Beatitudes thus stands before us as the Sinai of the New Testament, giving its laws to all peoples and to all times. But how different the aspect of the two mounts! Then the people dare not touch the mountain; now they press close up to the "Prophet like unto Moses" to hear the word of God. Then the Law came in a cluster of restrictions and negations; it now speaks in commands

most positive, in principles permanent as time itself; while from this new Sinai the clouds have disappeared, the thunders ceased, leaving a sky serene and bright, and a heaven which is strangely near.

Returning to Capernaum—which city, after the ejection from Nazareth, became the home of Jesus, and the centre of His Galilean ministry—He was met by a deputation of Jewish elders, who came to intercede with Him on behalf of a centurion whose servant was lying dangerously ill and apparently at the point of death. The narrative thus gives us, as its *dramatis personæ*, the Sufferer, the Intercessor, and the Healer.

As we read the story our thought is arrested, and naturally so, by the central figure. The imposing shadow of the centurion so completely fills our range of vision that it throws into the background the nameless one who in his secret chamber is struggling vainly in the tightening grip of death. But who is he who can command such a service? around whose couch is such a multitude of ministering feet? who is he whose panting breath can throw over the heart of his master, and over his face, the ripple-marks of a great sorrow, which sends hither and thither, as the wind tosses the dry leaves, soldiers of the army, elders of the Jews, friends of the master, and which makes even the feet of the Lord hasten with His succour?

"And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick and at the point of death." Such is the brief sentence which describes a character, and sums up the whole of an obscure life. We are not able to define precisely his position, for the word leaves us in doubt whether he were a slave or a servant of the centurion. Probably—if we may throw the light of the whole narrative upon the word—he was a confiden-

tial servant, living in the house of his master, on terms of more than usual intimacy. What those terms were we may easily discover by opening out the word "dear," reading its depths as well as its surface-meaning. In its lower sense it means "valuable," "worth-y" (putting its ancient accent upon the modern word). It sets the man, not over against the tables of the Law, but against the law of the tables, weighing him in the balances of trade, and estimating him by the scale of commercial values. But in this meaner, worldly mode of reckoning he is not found wanting. He is a servant proved and approved. Like Eliezer of old, he has identified himself with his master's interests, listening for his voice, and learning to read even the wishes which were unexpressed in words. Adjusting his will to the higher will, like a vane answering the currents of the wind, his hands, his feet, and his whole self have swung round to fall into the drift of his master's purpose. Faithful in his service, whether that service were under the master's eye or not, and faithful alike in the great and the little things, he has entered into his master's confidence, and so into his joy. Losing his own personality, he is content to be something between a cipher and a unit, only a "hand." But he is the master's right hand, strong and ever ready, so useful as to be almost an integral part of the master's self, without which the master's life would be incomplete and strangely bereaved. All this we may learn from the lower meaning of the phrase "was dear unto him."

But the word has a higher meaning, one that is properly rendered by our "dear." It implies esteem, affection, transferring our thought from the subject to the object, from the character of the servant to the influence it has exerted upon the master. The word is

thus an index, a barometrical reading, measuring for us the pressure of that influence, and recording for us the high sentiments of regard and affection it has evoked. As the trees around the pond lean towards the water which laves their roots, so the strong soul of the centurion, drawn by the attractions of a lowly but a noble life, leans toward, until it leans upon, his servant, giving him its confidence, its esteem and love, that golden fruitage of the heart. That such was the mutual relation of the master and the servant is evident, for Jesus, who read motives and heard thoughts, would not so freely and promptly have placed His miraculous power at the disposal of the centurion had his sorrow been only the selfish sorrow of losing what was commercially valuable. To an appeal of selfishness, though thrown forward and magnified by the sounding-boards of all the synagogues, the ears of Jesus would have been perfectly deaf; but when it was the cry of a genuine sorrow, the moan of a vicarious pain, an unselfish, disinterested grief, then the ears of Jesus were quick to hear, and His feet swift to respond.

It is impossible for us to define exactly what the sickness was, though the statement of St. Matthew that it was "palsy," and that he was "grievously tormented," would suggest that it might be an acute case of inflammatory rheumatism. But whatever it might be, it was a most painful, and as every one thought a mortal sickness, one that left no room for hope, save this last hope in the Divine mercy. But what a lesson is here for our times, as indeed for all times, the lesson of humanity! How little does Heaven make of rank and station! Jesus does not even see them; He ignores them utterly. To His mind Humanity is one, and the broad lines of distinction, the impassable

barriers Society is fond of drawing or setting up, to Him are but imaginary meridians of the sea, a name, but nothing more. It is but a nameless servant of a nameless master, one, too, of many, for a hundred others are ready, with military precision, to do that same master's will; but Jesus does not hesitate. He who voluntarily took upon Himself the form of a servant, as He came into the world "not to be ministered unto, but to minister," now becomes the Servant of a servant, saying to him who knew only how to obey, how to serve, "Here am I; command Me; use Me as thou wilt." All service is honourable, if we serve not ourselves, but our fellows, and it is doubly so if, serving man, we serve God too. As the sunshine looks down into, and strews with flowers, the lowest vales, so the Divine compassion falls on the lowliest lives, and the Divine grace makes them sweet and beautiful. Christianity is the great leveller, but it levels upwards, and if we possess the mind of Christ, His Spirit dwelling and ruling within, we too, like the great Apostle, shall know no man after the flesh; the accidents of birth, and rank, and fortune will sink back into the trifles that they are; for however these may vary, it is an eternal truth, though spoken by a son of the soil and the heather—

"A man's a man for a' that."

It is not easy to tell how the seed-thought is borne into a heart, there to germinate and ripen; for influences are subtle, invisible things. Like the pollen of a flower, which may be carried on the antennæ of some unconscious insect, or borne into the future by the passing breeze, so influences which will yet ripen into character and make destinies are thrown off uncon-

sciously from our common deeds, or they are borne on the wings of the chance, casual word. The case of the centurion is no exception. By what steps he has been brought into the clearer light we cannot tell, but evidently this Pagan officer is now a proselyte to the Hebrew faith and worship, the window of his soul open towards Jerusalem, while his professional life still looks towards Rome, as he renders to Cæsar the allegiance and service which are Cæsar's due. And what a testimony it is to the vitality and reproductive power of the Hebrew faith, that it should boast of at least three centurions, in the imperial ranks, of whom Scripture makes honourable mention—one at Capernaum; another, Cornelius, at Cæsarea, whose prayers and alms were had in remembrance of Heaven; and the third in Jerusalem, witnessing a good confession upon Calvary, and proclaiming within the shadow of the cross the Divinity of the Crucified. It shows how the Paganism of Rome failed to satisfy the aspirations of the soul, and how Mars, red and lurid through the night, paled and disappeared at the rising of the Sun.

Although identifying himself with the religious life of the city, the centurion had not yet had any personal interview with Jesus. Possibly his military duties prevented his attendance at the synagogue, so that he had not seen the cures Jesus there wrought upon the demoniac and the man with the withered hand. The report of them, however, must soon have reached him, intimate as he was with the officials of the synagogue; while the nobleman, the cure of whose sick son is narrated by St. John (iv. 46), would probably be amongst his personal friends, an acquaintance at any rate. The centurion "heard" of Jesus, but he could not have heard had not some one spoken of Him. The

Christ was borne into his mind and heart on the breath of common speech; that is, the little human word grew into the Divine Word. It was the verbal testimony as to what Jesus had done that now led to the still greater things He was prepared to do. And such is the place and power of testimony to-day. It is the most persuasive, the most effective form of speech. Testimony will often win where argument has failed, and gold itself is all-powerless to extend the frontiers of the heavenly kingdom until it is melted down and exchanged for the higher currency of speech. It is first the human voice crying in the wilderness, and then the incarnate Word, whose coming makes the wilderness to be glad, and the desert places of life to sing. And so, while a sword of flame guards the Paradise Lost, it is a "tongue" of flame, that symbol of a perpetual Pentecost, which calls man back, redeemed now, to the Paradise Restored. If Christians would only speak more for Christ; if, shaking off that foolish reserve, they would in simple language testify to what they themselves have seen, and known, and experienced, how rapidly would the kingdom come, the kingdom for which we pray, indeed, but for which, alas, we are afraid to speak! Nations then would be born in a day, and the millennium, instead of being the distant or the forlorn hope it is, would be a speedy realization. We should be in the fringe of it directly. It is said that on one of the Alpine glaciers the guides forbid travellers to speak, lest the mere tremor of the human voice should loosen and bring down the deadly avalanche. Whether this be so or not, it was some unnamed voice that now sent the centurion to Christ, and brought the Christ to him.

It was probably a sudden relapse, with increased

paroxysms of pain, on the part of the sufferer, which now decided the centurion to make his appeal to Jesus, sending a deputation of Jewish elders, as the day was on the wane, to the house to which Jesus had now returned. They make their request that "He would come and save the servant of the centurion, who was now lying at the point of death." True advocates, and skilful, were these elders. They made the centurion's cause their own, as if their hearts had caught the rhythmic beat of his great sorrow, and when Jesus held back a little—as He often did, to test the intensity of the desire and the sincerity of the suppliant—"they besought Him earnestly," or "kept on beseeching," as the tense of the verb would imply, crowning their entreaty with the plea, "He is worthy that Thou shouldest do this, for he loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue." Possibly they feared—putting a Hebrew construction upon His sympathies—that Jesus would demur, and perhaps refuse, because their client was a foreigner. They did not know, what we know so well, that the mercy of Jesus was as broad as it was deep, knowing no bounds where its waves of blessing are stayed. But how forceful and prevalent was their plea! Though they knew it not, these elders do but ask Jesus to illustrate the words He has just spoken, "Give, and it shall be given unto you." And had not Jesus laid this down as one of the laws of mercy, that action and reaction are equal? Had He not been describing the orbit in which blessings travel, showing that though its orbit be apparently eccentric at times, like the boomerang, that wheels round and comes back to the hand that threw it forward, the mercy shown will eventually come back to him who showed it, with a wealth of

heavenly usury? And so their plea was the one of all others to be availing. It was the precept of the mount evolved into practice. It was, "Bless him, for he has richly blessed us. He has opened his hand, showering his favours upon us; do Thou open Thine hand now, and show him that the God of the Hebrews is a God who hears, and heeds, and helps."

It has been thought, from the language of the elders, that the synagogue built by the centurion was the only one that Capernaum possessed; for they speak of it as "the" synagogue. But this does not follow, and indeed it is most improbable. They might still call it "the" synagogue, not because it was the only one, but because it was the one foremost and uppermost in their thought, the one in which they were particularly interested. The definite article no more proves this to be the only synagogue in Capernaum than the phrase "the house" (ver. 10) proves the house of the centurion to be the only house of the city. The fact is that in the Gospel age Capernaum was a busy and important place, as shown by its possessing a garrison of soldiers, and by its being the place of custom, situated as it was on the great highway of trade. And if Jerusalem could boast of four hundred synagogues, and Tiberias—a city not even named by the Synoptists—fourteen, Capernaum certainly would possess more than one. Indeed, had Capernaum been the insignificant village that one synagogue would imply, then, instead of deserving the bitter woes Jesus pronounced upon it, it would have deserved the highest commendation, as the most fruitful field in all His ministry, giving Him, besides other disciples, a ruler of the Jews and the commandant of the garrison. That it deserved such bitter "woes" proves that Capernaum

had a population both dense and, in the general, hostile to Jesus, compared with which His friends and adherents were a feeble few.

In spite of the negative manner Jesus purposely showed at the first, He fully intended to grant all the elders had asked, and allowing them now to guide Him, He "went with them." When, however, they were come near the house, the centurion sent other "friends" to intercept Jesus, and to urge Him not to take any further trouble. The message, which they deliver in the exact form in which it was given to them, is so characteristic and exquisitely beautiful that it is best to give it entire: "Lord, trouble not Thyself: for I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee: but say the word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."

The narrative of St. Matthew differs slightly from that of St. Luke, in that he omits all reference to the two deputations, speaking of the interview as being personal with the centurion. But St. Matthew's is evidently an abbreviated narrative, and he passes over the intermediaries, in accordance with the maxim that he who acts through another does it *per se*. But both agree as to the terms of the message, a message which is at once a marvel and a rebuke to us, and one which was indeed deserving of being twice recorded and eulogized in the pages of the Gospels.

And how the message reveals the man, disclosing as in a transparency the character of this nameless foreigner! We have already seen how broad were his

sympathies, and how generous his deeds, as he makes room in his large heart for a conquered and despised people, at his own cost building a temple for the exercises of their faith. We have seen, too, what a wealth of tenderness and benevolence was hiding beneath a somewhat stern exterior, in his affection for a servant, and his anxious solicitude for that servant's health. But now we see in the centurion other graces of character, that set him high amongst those "outside saints" who worshipped in the outer courts, until such time as the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, and the way into the Holiest was opened for all. And what a beautiful humility is here! what an absence of assumption or of pride! Occupying an honoured position, representing in his own person an empire which was world-wide, surrounded by troops of friends, and by all the comforts wealth could buy, accustomed to speak in imperative, if not in imperious ways, yet as he turns towards Jesus it is with a respectful, yea, a reverential demeanour. He feels himself in the presence of some Higher Being, an unseen but august Cæsar. Nay, not in His presence either, for into that audience-chamber he feels that he has neither the fitness nor the right to intrude. All that he can do is to send forward his petition by the hands of worthier advocates, who have access to Him, while he himself keeps back out of sight, with bared feet standing by the outer gate. Others can speak well and highly of him, recounting his noble deeds, but of himself he has nothing good to say; he can only speak of self in terms of disparagement, as he emphasizes his littleness, his unworthiness. Nor was it with him the conventional hyperbole of Eastern manners; it was the language of deepest, sincerest truth, when he said that he was not worthy

even to speak with Christ, or to receive such a Guest beneath his roof. Between himself and the One he reverently addressed as "Lord" there was an infinite distance; for one was human, while the Other was Divine.

And what a rare and remarkable faith! In his thought Jesus is an Imperator, commanding all forces, as He rules the invisible realms. His will is supreme over all substances, across all distances. "Thou hast no need, Lord, to take any trouble about my poor request. There is no necessity that Thou shouldest take one step, or even lift up a finger; Thou hast only to speak the word, and it is done;" and then he gives that wonderfully graphic illustration borrowed from his own military life.

The passage "For I also am a man set under authority" is generally rendered as referring to his own subordinate position under the Chiliarch. But such a rendering, as it seems to us, breaks the continuity of thought, and grammatically is scarcely accurate. The whole passage is an amplification and description of the "word" of ver. 7, and the "also" introduces something the centurion and Jesus possess in common, *i.e.*, the power to command; for the "I also" certainly corresponds with the "Thou" which is implied, but not expressed. But the centurion did not mean to imply that Jesus possessed only limited, delegated powers; this was farthest from his thought, and formed no part of the comparison. But let the clause "I also am a man set under authority" be rendered, not as referring to the authority which is above him, but to that which is *upon* him—"I also am vested with authority," or "Authority is put upon me"—and the meaning becomes clear. The "also" is no longer warped into an ungrammatical meaning, introducing a

contrast rather than a likeness ; while the clause which follows, "having under myself soldiers," takes its proper place as an enlargement and explanation of the "authority" with which the centurion is invested.

The centurion speaks in a soldierly way. There is a crispness and sharpness about his tones—that Shibboleth of militaryism. He says, "My word is all-powerful in the ranks which I command. I have but to say 'Come,' or 'Go,' and my word is instantly obeyed. The soldier upon whose ear it falls dare not hesitate, any more than he dare refuse. He 'goes' at my word, anywhither, on some forlorn hope it may be, or to his grave." And such is the obedience, instant and absolute, that military service demands. The soldier must not question, he must obey; he must not reason, he must act; for when the word of command—that leaded word of authority—falls upon his ear, it completely fills his soul, and makes him deaf to all other, meaner voices.

Such was the thought in the centurion's mind, and from the "go" and "come" of military authority to the higher "word" of Jesus the transition is easy. But how strong the faith that could give to Jesus such an enthronement, that could clothe His word with such superhuman power! Yonder, in his secluded chamber, lies the sufferer, his nerves quivering in their pain, while the mortal sickness physicians and remedies have all failed to touch, much less to remove, has dragged him close up to the gate of death. But this "word" of Jesus shall be all-sufficient. Spoken here and now, it shall pass over the intervening streets and through the interposing walls and doors; it shall say to these demons of evil, "Loose him, and let him go," and in a moment the torturing pain shall cease, the

fluttering heart shall resume its healthy, steady beat, the rigid muscles shall become pliant as before, while through arteries and veins the life-blood—its poison all extracted now—shall regain its healthful, quiet flow. The centurion believed all this of the "word" of Jesus, and even more. In his heart it was a word all-potent, if not omnipotent, like to the word of Him who "spake, and it was done," who "commanded, and it stood fast." And if the word of Jesus in these realms of life and death was so imperative and all-commanding, could the Christ Himself be less than Divine?

To find such confidence reposed in Himself was to Jesus something new and to find this rarest plant of faith growing up on Gentile soil was a still greater marvel and turning to the multitude which clustered thick and eager around, He said to them, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And commending the centurion's faith, He honours it too, doing all he requested, and even more, though without the "word." Jesus does not even say "I will," or "Be it so," but He works the instant and perfect cure by a mere volition. He wills it, and it is done, so that when the friends returned to the house they found the servant "whole."

Of the sequel we know nothing. We do not even read that Jesus saw the man at whose faith He had so marvelled. But doubtless He did, for His heart was drawn strangely to him, and doubtless He gave to him many of those "words" for which his soul had longed and listened, words in which were held, as in solution, all authority and all truth. And doubtless, too, in the after-years, Jesus crowned that life of faithful but unnoted service with the higher "word," the heavenly "Well done."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ANOINTING OF THE FEET.

LUKE vii. 36-50.

WHETHER the narrative of the Anointing is inserted in its chronological order we cannot say, for the Evangelist gives us no word by which we may recognize either its time or its place-relation; but we can easily see that it falls into the story artistically, with a singular fitness. Going back to the context, we find Jesus pronouncing a high eulogium upon John the Baptist. Hereupon the Evangelist adds a statement of his own, calling attention to the fact that even John's ministry failed to reach and influence the Pharisees and lawyers, who rejected the counsel of God, and declined the baptism of His messenger. Then Jesus, in one of His brief but exquisite parables, sketches the character of the Pharisees. Recalling a scene of the market-place, where the children were accustomed to play at "weddings" and "funerals"—which, by the way, are the only games at which the children of the land play to-day—and where sometimes the play was spoiled and stopped by some of the children getting into a pet, and lapsing into a sullen silence, Jesus says that is just a picture of the childish perversity of the Pharisees. They respond neither to the mourning of the one nor to the music of the

other, but because John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, they call him a maniac, and say, "He hath a devil;" while of Jesus, who has no ascetic ways, but mingles in the gatherings of social life, a Man amongst men, they say, "Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." And having recorded this, our Evangelist inserts, as an appropriate sequel, the account of the supper in the Pharisee's house, with its idyllic interlude, played by a woman's hand, a narrative which shows how Wisdom is justified of all her children, and how these condescensions of Jesus, His intercourse with even those who were ceremonially or morally unclean, were both proper and beautiful.

It was in one of the Galilean towns, perhaps at Nain, where Jesus was surprised at receiving an invitation to the house of a Pharisee. Such courtesies on the part of a class who prided themselves on their exclusiveness, and who were bitterly intolerant of all who were outside their narrow circle, were exceptional and rare. Besides, the teaching of Jesus was diametrically opposed to the leaven of the Pharisees. Between the caste of the one and the catholicism of the other was a wide gulf of divergence. To Jesus the heart was everything, and the outflowing issues were coloured by its hues; to the Pharisees the hand, the outward touch, was more than heart, and contact more than conduct. Jesus laid a Divine emphasis upon character; the cleanness He demanded was moral cleanness, purity of heart; that of the Pharisees was a ceremonial cleanness, the avoidance of things which were under a ceremonial ban. And so they magnified the jots and tittles, scrupulously tithing their mint and anise, while they overlooked completely the moralities of the heart,

and reduced to a mere nothing those grander virtues of mercy and of justice. Between the Separatists and Jesus there was therefore constant friction, which afterwards developed into open hostility; and while they ever sought to damage Him with opprobrious epithets, and to bring His teaching into disrepute, He did not fail to expose their hollowness and insincerity, tearing off the veneer with which they sought to hide the brood of viperous things their creed had gendered, and to hurl against their whited sepulchres His indignant "woes."

It would almost seem as if Jesus hesitated in accepting the invitation, for the tense of the verb "desired" implies that the request was repeated. Possibly other arrangements had been made, or perhaps Jesus sought to draw out and test the sincerity of the Pharisee, who in kind and courteous words offered his hospitality. The hesitation would certainly not arise from any reluctance on His part, for Jesus refused no open door; he welcomed any opportunity of influencing a soul. As the shepherd of His own parable went over the mountainous paths in quest of his lone, lost sheep, so Jesus was glad to risk unkind aspersions, and to bear the "fierce light" of hostile, questioning eyes, if He might but rescue a soul, and win some erring one back to virtue and to truth.

The character of the host we cannot exactly determine. The narrative lights up his features but indistinctly, for the nameless "sinner" is the central object of the picture, while Simon stands in the background, out of focus, and so somewhat veiled in obscurity. To many he appears as the cold and heartless censor, distant and haughty, seeking by the guile of hospitality to entrap Jesus, hiding behind the mask of friendship

some dark and sinister motive. But such deep shadows are cast by our own thoughts rather than by the narrative; they are the random "guesses after truth," instead of the truth itself. It will be noticed that Jesus does not impugn in the least his motive in proffering his hospitality; and this, though but a negative evidence, is not without its weight, when on a similar occasion the evil motive was brought to light. The only charge laid against him—if charge it be—was the omission of certain points of etiquette that Eastern hospitality was accustomed to observe, and even here there is nothing to show that Jesus was treated differently from the other invited guests. The omission, while it failed to single out Jesus for special honour, might still mean no disrespect; and at the most it was a breach of manners, deportment, rather than of morals, just one of those lapses Jesus was most ready to overlook and forgive. We shall form a juster estimate of the man's character if we regard him as a seeker after truth. Evidently he has felt a drawing towards Jesus; indeed, ver. 47 would almost imply that he had received some personal benefit at His hands. Be this as it may, he is desirous of a closer and a freer intercourse. His mind is perplexed, the balances of his judgment swinging in alternate and opposite ways. A new problem has presented itself to him, and in that problem is one factor he cannot yet value. It is the unknown quantity, Jesus of Nazareth. Who is He? what is He? A prophet—the Prophet—the Christ? Such are the questions running through his mind—questions which must be answered soon, as his thoughts and opinions have ripened into convictions. And so he invites Jesus to his house and board, that in the nearer vision and the unfettered freedom of social

intercourse he may solve the great enigma. Nay, he invites Jesus with a degree of earnestness, putting upon Him the constraint of a great desire; and leaving his heart open to conviction, ready to embrace the truth as soon as he recognizes it to be truth, he flings open the door of his hospitalities, though in so doing he shakes the whole fabric of Pharisaic exclusiveness and sanctity. Seeking after truth, the truth finds him.

There was a simplicity and freeness in the social life of the East which our Western civilization can scarcely understand. The door of the guest-chamber was left open, and the uninvited, even comparative strangers, were allowed to pass in and out during the entertainment; or they might take their seats by the wall, as spectators and listeners. It was so here. No sooner have the guests taken their places, reclining around the table, their bared feet projecting behind them, than the usual drift of the uninvited set in, amongst whom, almost unnoticed in the excitements of the hour, was "a woman of the city." Simon in his soliloquy speaks of her as "a sinner;" but had we his testimony only, we should hesitate in giving to the word its usually received meaning; for "sinner" was a pet term of the Pharisees, applied to all who were outside their circle, and even to Jesus Himself. But when our Evangelist, in describing her character, makes use of the same word, we can only interpret the "sinner" in one way, in its sensual, depraved meaning. And with this agrees the phrase "a woman which was in the city," which seems to indicate the loose relations of her too-public life.

Bearing in her hand "an alabaster cruse of ointment," for a purpose which soon became apparent, she

passed over to the place where Jesus sat, and stood directly behind Him. Accustomed as she had been to hide her deeds in the veil of darkness, nothing but the current of a deep emotion could have carried her thus through the door of the guest-chamber, setting her, alone of her sex, full in the glare of the lamps and the light of scornful eyes; and no sooner has she reached her goal than the storm of the heart breaks in a rain of tears, which fall hot and fast upon the feet of the Master. This, however, is no part of her plan; they were impromptu tears she could not restrain; and instantly she stoops down, and with the loosened tresses of her hair she wipes His feet, kissing them passionately as she did so. There is a delicate meaning in the construction of the Greek verb, "she *began* to wet His feet with her tears;" it implies that the action was not continued, as when afterwards she "anointed" His feet. It was momentary, instantaneous, checked soon as it was discovered. Then pouring from her flask the fragrant nard, she proceeded with loving, leisurely haste to anoint His feet, until the whole chamber was redolent of the sweet perfume.

But what is the meaning of this strange episode, this "song without words," struck by the woman's hands as from a lyre of alabaster? It was evidently something determined, prearranged. The phrase "when she knew that He was sitting at meat" means something more than she "heard." Her knowledge as to where Jesus was had not come to her in a casual way, in the vagrant gossip of the town; it had come by search and inquiry on her part, as if the plan were already determined, and she were eager to carry it out. The cruse of ointment that she brings also reveals the settled resolve that she came on purpose, and she

came only, to anoint the feet of Jesus. The word, too, rendered "she brought" has a deeper meaning than our translation conveys. It is a word that is used in ten other passages of the New Testament, where it is invariably rendered "receive," or "received," referring to something received as a wage, or as a gift, or as a prize. Used here in the narrative, it implies that the cruse of ointment had not been bought; it was something she had received as a gift, or possibly as the wages of her sin. And not only was it prearranged, part of a deliberate intention, but evidently it was not displeasing to Jesus. He did not resent it. He gives Himself up passively to the woman's will. He allows her to touch, and even to kiss His feet, though He knows that to society she is a moral leper, and that her fragrant ointment is possibly the reward of her shame. We must, then, look behind the deed to the motive. To Jesus the ointment and the tears were full of meaning, eloquent beyond any power of words. Can we discover that meaning, and read why they were so welcome? We think we may.

And here let us say that Simon's thoughts were perfectly natural and correct, with no word or tone that we can censure. Canon Farrar, it is true, detects in the "This man" with which he speaks of Jesus a "supercilious scorn;" but we fail to see the least scorn, or even disrespect, for the pronoun Simon uses is the identical word used by St. Matthew (Matt. iii. 3), of John the Baptist, when he says, "*This* is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias," and the word of the "voice from heaven" which said, "*This* is My beloved Son" (Matt. iii. 17). That the woman was a sinner Simon knew well; and would not Jesus know it too, if He were a prophet? Doubtless He would; but as

Simon marks no sign of disapproval upon the face of Jesus, the enigmatical "if" grows larger in his mind, and he begins to think that Jesus has scarcely the prescience—the power of seeing through things—that a true prophet would have. Simon's reasoning was right, but his facts were wrong. He imagined that Jesus did not know "who and what manner of woman" this was; whereas Jesus knew more than he, for He knew not only the past of shame, but a present of forgiveness and hope.

And what did the tears and the ointment mean, that Jesus should receive them so readily, and that He should speak of them so approvingly? The parable Jesus spoke to Simon will explain it. "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee," said Jesus, answering his thoughts—for He had heard them—by words. And falling naturally into the parabolic form of speech—as He did when He wanted to make His meaning more startling and impressive—He said, "A certain moneylender had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most?" A question to which Simon could promptly answer, "He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most." It is clear, then, whatever others might see in the woman's deed, that Jesus read in it the expression of her love, and that He accepted it as such; the tears and outpoured ointment were the broken utterances of an affection which was too deep for words. But if her offering—as it certainly was—was the gift of love, how shall we explain her tears? for love, in the presence of the beloved, does not weep so passionately, indeed does not weep at all, except, it may be, tears of joy, or tears of a mutual sorrow. In this way: As the wind blows landward

from the sea, the mountain ranges cool the clouds, and cause them to unlock their treasures, in the fertile and refreshing rains; so in the heart of this "sinner" a cloud of recollections is blown up suddenly from her dark past; the memories of her shame—even though that shame be now forgiven—sweep across her soul with resistless force, for penitence does not end when forgiveness is assured; and as she finds herself in the presence of Infinite Purity, what wonder that the heart's great deeps are broken up, and that the wild storm of conflicting emotions within should find relief in a rain of tears? Tears of penitence they doubtless were, bitter with the sorrow and the shame of years of guilt; but they were tears of gratitude and holy love as well, all suffused and brightened by the touch of mercy and the light of hope. And so the passionate weeping was no acted grief, no hysterical tempest; it was the perfectly natural accompaniment of profound emotion, that storm of mingled but diverse elements which now swept through her soul. Her tears, like the dew-drops that hang upon leaf and flower, were wrought in the darkness, fashioned by the Night, and at the same time they were the jewels that graced the robe of a new dawn, the dawn of a better, a purer life.

But how came this new affection within her heart, an affection so deep that it must have tears and anointings for its expression—this new affection, which has become a pure and holy passion, and which breaks through conventional bonds, as it has broken through the old habits, the ill usages of a life? Jesus Himself traces for us this affection to its source. He tells us—for the parable is all meaningless unless we recognize in the five-hundred-pence debtor the sinning woman—

that her great love grows out of her great forgiveness, a past forgiveness too, for Jesus speaks of the change as already accomplished: "Her sins, which were many, are (have been) forgiven." And here we touch an unwritten chapter of the Divine life; for as the woman's love flows up around Jesus, casting its treasures at His feet, so the forgiveness must first have come from Jesus. His voice it must have been which said, "Let there be light," and which turned the chaos of her dark soul into another Paradise. At any rate, she thinks she owes to Him her all. Her new creation, with its deliverance from the tyrannous past; her new joys and hopes, the spring-blossom of a new and heavenly existence; the conscious purity which has now taken the place of lust—she owes all to the word and power of Jesus. But when this change took place, or when, in the great transit, this Venus of the moral firmament passed across the disc of the Sun, we do not know. St. John inserts in his story one little incident, which is like a piece of mosaic dropped out from the Gospels of the Synoptists, of a woman who was taken in her sin and brought to Jesus. And when the hands of her accusers were not clean enough to cast the first stone, but they shrank one by one out of sight, self-condemned, Jesus bade the penitent one to "go in peace, and sin no more."* Are the two characters identical? and does the forgiven one, dismissed into peace, now return to bring to her Saviour her offering of gratitude and love? We can only say that such an identification is at least possible, and more so far than the improbable identification of tradition, which

* The narrative is of doubtful authenticity; but even should it be proved to be a postscript by some later scribe, it would still point to a tradition, which, as Stier says, was "well founded and genuine."

confounds this nameless "sinner" with Mary Magdalene, which is an assumption perfectly baseless and most unlikely.

And so in this erring one, who now puts her crown of fragrance upon the feet of Jesus, since she is unworthy to put it upon His head, we see a penitent and forgiven soul. Somewhere Jesus found her, out on the forbidden paths, the paths of sin, which, steep and slippery, lead down to death; His look arrested her, for it cast within her heart the light of a new hope; His presence, which was the embodiment of a purity infinite and absolute, shot through her soul the deep consciousness and conviction of her guilt; and doubtless upon her ears had fallen the words of the great absolution and the Divine benediction, "Thy sins are all forgiven; go in peace," words which to her made all things new—a new heart within, and a new earth around. And now, regenerate and restored, the sad past forgiven, all the currents of her thought and life reversed, the love of sin turned into a perfect loathing, her language, spoken in tears, kisses, and fragrant nard, is the language of the Psalmist, "O Lord, I will praise Thee; for though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me." It was the *Magnificat* of a forgiven and a loving soul.

Simon had watched the woman's actions in silence, though in evident displeasure. He would have resented her touch, and have forbade even her presence; but found under his roof, she became in a certain sense a guest, shielded by the hospitable courtesies of Eastern life. But if he said nothing, he thought much, and his thoughts were hard and bitter. He looked upon the woman as a moral leper, an outcast. There was defile-

ment in her touch, and he would have shaken it off from him as if it were a viper, fit only to be cast into the fire of a burning indignation. Now Jesus must teach him a lesson, and throw his thoughts back upon himself. And first He teaches him that there is forgiveness for sin, even the sin of uncleanness; and in this we see the bringing in of a better hope. The Law said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die;" it shall be cut off from the people of Israel. The Law had but one voice for the adulterer and adulteress, the voice which was the knell of a sharp and fearful doom, without reprieve or mercy of any kind. It cast upon them the deadly rain of stones, as if it would hurl a whole Sinai upon them. But Jesus comes to man with a message of mercy and of hope. He proclaims a deliverance from the sin, and a pardon for the sinner; nay, He offers Himself, as at once the Forgiver of sin and the Saviour from sin. Let Him but see it repented of; let Him but see the tears of penitence, or hear the sighs of a broken and contrite heart, and He steps forward at once to deliver and to save. The Valley of Achor, where the Law sets up its memorial of shame, Jesus turns into a door of hope. He speaks life where the Law spoke death; He offers hope where the Law gave but despair; and where exacting Law gave pains and fearful punishment only, the Mediator of the New Covenant, to the penitent though erring ones, spoke pardon and peace, even the perfect peace, the eternal peace.

And Jesus teaches Simon another lesson. He teaches him to judge himself, and not either by his own fictitious standard, by the Pharisaic table of excellence, but by the Divine standard. Holding up as a mirror the example of the woman, Jesus gives to Simon a portrait

of his own self, as seen in the heavenly light, all shrunken and dwarfed, the large "I" of Pharisaic complacency becoming, in comparison, small indeed. Turning to the woman, He said unto Simon, "Seest thou this woman?" (And Simon had not seen her; he had only seen her shadow, the shadow of her sinful past). "I entered into thine house; thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she hath wetted My feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest Me no kiss: but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she hath anointed My feet with ointment." It is a problem of the pronouns, in which the "I" being given, it is desired to find the relative values of "thou" and "she." And how beautifully does Jesus work it out, according to the rules of Divine proportions! With what antithetical skill does He make His comparison, or rather His contrast! "*Thou* gavest me *no water* for My feet; *she* hath wetted My feet with her *tears*, and wiped them with her hair. *Thou* gavest me *no kiss: she* hath not ceased *to kiss my feet.* My *head* with *oil thou* didst not anoint: *she* hath anointed My *feet* with *ointment.*"

And so Jesus sets over against the omissions of Simon the loving and lavish attentions of the woman; and while reproving him, not for a lack of civility, but for a want of heartiness in his reception of Himself, He shows how deep and full run the currents of her affection, breaking through the banks and bounds of conventionality in their sweet overflow, while as yet the currents of his love were intermittent, shallow, and somewhat cold. He does not denounce *this* Simon as having no part or lot in this matter. No; He even credits him with a little love, as He speaks of him as a

pardoned, justified soul. And it was true. The heart of Simon had been drawn toward Jesus, and in the urgent invitation and these proffered hospitalities we can discern a nascent affection. His love is yet but in the bud. It is there, a thing of life; but it is confined, constrained, and lacking the sweetness of the ripened and opened flower. Jesus does not cut off the budding affection, and cast it out amongst the withered and dead things, but sprinkling it with the dew of His speech, and throwing upon it the sunshine of His approving look, He leaves it to develop, ripening into an after-harvest of fragrance and of beauty. And why was Simon's love more feeble and immature than that of the woman? First, because he did not see so much in Jesus as she did. He was yet stumbling over the "if," with some lingering doubts as to whether He were "the prophet;" to her He is more than a "prophet," even her Lord and her Saviour, covering her past with a mantle of mercy, and opening within her heart a heaven. Then, too, Simon's forgiveness was not so great as hers. Not that any forgiveness can be less than entire; for when Heaven saves it is not a salvation by instalments—certain sins remitted, while others are held back uncancelled. But Simon's views of sin were not so sharp and vivid as were those of the woman. The atmosphere of Phariseeism in its moral aspects was hazy; it magnified human virtues, and created all sorts of illusive mirages of self-righteousness and reputed holiness, and doubtless Simon's vision had been impaired by the refracting atmosphere of his creed. The greatness of our salvation is ever measured by the greatness of our danger and our guilt. The heavier the burden and weight of condemnation, the deeper is the peace and the higher are the ecstasies of

joy when that condemnation is removed. Shall we say, then, "We must sin more, that love may more abound"? Nay, we need not, we must not; for as Godet says, "What is wanting to the best of us, in order to love much, is not sin, but the knowledge of it." And this deeper knowledge of sin, the more vivid realization of its guilt, its virulence, its all-pervasiveness, comes just in proportion as we approach Christ. Standing close up to the cross, feeling the mortal agonies of Him whose death was necessary as sin's atonement, in that vivid light of redeeming love even the strict moralist, the Pharisee of the Pharisees, could speak of himself as the "chief" of sinners.

The lesson was over, and Jesus dismissed the woman —who, with her empty alabaster flask, had lingered at the feast, and who had heard all the conversation— with the double assurance of pardon: "Thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." And such is the Divine order everywhere and always— Faith, Love, Peace. Faith is the procuring cause, or the condition of salvation; love and peace are its after-fruits; for without faith, love would be only fear, and peace itself would be unrest.

She went in peace, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding;" but she left behind her the music of her tears and the sweet fragrance of her deed, a fragrance and a music which have filled the whole world, and which, floating across the valley of death, will pass up into heaven itself!

There was still one little whisper of murmuring, or questioning rather; for the guests were startled by the boldness of His words, and asked among themselves, "Who is this that even forgiveth sins?" But it will be noticed that Simon himself is no longer among the

questioners, the doubters. Jesus is to him "the Prophet," and more than a prophet, for who can forgive sins but God alone? And though we hear no more of him or of his deeds, we may rest assured that his conquered heart was given without reserve to Jesus, and that he too learned to love with a true affection, even with the "perfect love," which "casteth out fear."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

LUKE viii. 1-18.

IN a single parenthetical sentence our Evangelist indicates a marked change in the mode of the Divine ministry. Hitherto "His own city," Capernaum, has been a sort of centre, from which the lines of light and blessing have radiated. Now, however, He leaves Capernaum, and makes a circuit through the province of Galilee, going through its cities and villages in a systematic, and as the verb would imply, a leisurely way, preaching the "good tidings of the kingdom of God." Though no mention is made of them, we are not to suppose that miracles were suspended; but evidently they were set in the background, as secondary things, the by-plays or "asides" of the Divine Teacher, who now is intent upon delivering His message, the last message, too, that they would hear from Him. Accompanying Him, and forming an imposing demonstration, were His twelve disciples, together with "many" women, who ministered unto them of their substance, among whom were three prominent ones, probably persons of position and influence—Mary of Magdala, Joanna, wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, who had been healed by Jesus of "evil spirits and infirmities"—which last word, in New Testament language, is a synonym for physical weak-

ness and disorder. Of the particulars and results of this mission we know nothing, unless we may see, in the "great multitude" which followed and thronged Jesus on His return, the harvest reaped from the Galilean hills. Our Evangelist, at any rate, links them together, as if the "great multitude" which now lines the shore was, in part at least, the cloud of eager souls which had been caught up and borne along on His fervid speech, as the echoes of the kingdom went resounding among the hills and vales of Galilee.

Returning to Capernaum, whither the crowds follow Him, every city sending its contingent of curious or conquered souls, Jesus, as St. Matthew and St. Mark inform us, leaves the house, and seeks the open stretch of shore, where from a boat—probably the familiar boat of Simon—He addresses the multitudes, adopting now, as His favourite mode of speech, the amplified parable. It is probable that He had observed on the part of His disciples an undue elation of spirit. Reading the crowds numerically, and not discerning the different motives which had brought them together, their eyes deceived them. They imagined that these eager multitudes were but a wave-sheaf of the harvest already ripe, which only waited their gathering-in. But it is not so; and Jesus sifts and winnows His audience, to show His disciples that the apparent is not always the real, and that between the hearers of the word and the doers there will ever be a wide margin of disappointment and comparative failure. The harvest, in God's husbandry, as in man's, does not depend altogether upon the quality of the seed or the faithfulness of the sower, but upon the nature of the soil on which it falls.

As the sower went forth to sow his seed, "some fell

by the way-side, and it was trodden under-foot, and the birds of the heaven devoured it." In his carefulness to cover all his ground, the sower had gone close up to the boundary, and some of the seed had fallen on the edge of the bare and trampled path, where it lay homeless and exposed. It was in contact with the earth, but it was a mechanical, and not a vital touch. There was no correspondence, no communion between them. Instead of welcoming and nourishing the seed, it held it aloof, in a cold, repelling way. Had the soil been sympathetic and receptive, it held within itself all the elements of growth. Touched by the subtle life that was hidden within the seed, the dead earth itself had lived, growing up into blades of promise, and from the full ear throwing itself forward into the future years. But the earth was hard and unreceptive; its possibilities of blessing were locked up and buried beneath a crust of trampled soil that was callous and unresponsive as the rock itself. And so the seed lay unwelcomed and alone, and the life which the warm touch of earth would have loosened and set free remained within its husk as a dead thing, without voice or hearing. There was nothing else for it but to be ground into dust by the passing foot or to be picked up by the foraging birds.

The parable was at once a prophecy and an experience. Forming a part of the crowd which surrounded Jesus was an outer ring of hearers who came but to criticize and to cavil. They had no desire to be taught—at any rate by such a teacher. They were themselves the "knowing ones," the learned, and they looked with suspicion and ill-concealed scorn upon the youthful Nazarene. Turning upon the Speaker a cold, questioning glance, or exchanging signals with

one another, they were evidently hostile to Jesus, listening, it is true, but with a feline alertness, hoping to entrap the sweet Singer in His speech. Upon these, and such as these, the word of God, even when spoken by the Divine Son, made no impression. It was a speaking to the rocks, with no other result than the awaking of a few echoes of mockery and banter.

The experience is still true. Among those who frequent the house of God are many whose worship is a cold, conventional thing. Drawn thither by custom, by the social instinct, or by the love of change, they pass within the gates of the Lord's house, ostensibly to worship. But they are insincere, indifferent; they bring their body, and deposit it in the accustomed pew, but they might as well have put there a bag of ashes or an automaton of brass. Their mind is not here, and the cold, stolid features, unlighted by any passing gleam, tell too surely of a vacancy or vagrancy of thought. And even while the lips are throwing off mechanically *Jubilates* and *Te Deums* their heart is "far from Me," chasing some phantom "will o' the wisp," or dreaming their dreams of pleasure, gain, and ease. The worship of God they themselves would call it, but God does not recognize it. He calls their prayers a weariness, their incense an abomination. Theirs is but a worship of Self, as, setting up their image of clay, they summon earth's musicians to play their sweet airs about it. God, with them, is set back, ignored, proscribed. The personal "I" is writ so large, and is so all-pervasive, that there is no room for the I AM. Living for earth, all the fibres of their being growing downwards towards it, heaven is not even a cloud drifting across their distant vision; it is an empty space, a vacancy. To the voices of earth

their ears are keenly sensitive; its very whispers thrill them with new excitements, but to the voices of Heaven they are deaf; the still, small voice is all unheard, and even the thunders of God are so muffled as to be unrecognized and scarcely audible. And so the word of God falls upon their ears in vain. It drops upon a soil that is impervious and antipathetic, a heart which knows no penitence, and a life whose fancied goodness has no room for mercy, or which finds such complete satisfaction in the gains of unrighteousness or the pleasures of sin that it is purposely and persistently deaf to all higher, holier voices. Ulysses filled his ears with wax, lest he should yield himself up to the enchantments of the sirens. The fable is true, even when read in reversed lines; for when Virtue, Purity, and Faith invite men to their resting-place, calling them to the Islands of the Blessed, and to the Paradise of God, they charm in vain. Deafening their ears, and not deigning to give a passing thought to the higher call, men drift past the heaven which might have been theirs, until these holier voices are silenced by the awful distance.

That the word of God is inoperative here is through no fault, either of the seed or of the sower. That word is still "quick and powerful," but it is sterile, because it finds nothing on which it may grow. It is not "understood," as Jesus Himself explains. It falls upon the outward ear alone, and there only as unmeaning sound, like the accents of some unknown tongue. And so the wicked one easily takes away the word from their heart; for, as the preposition itself implies, that word had not fallen into the heart; it was lying *on* it in a superficial way, like the seed cast upon the trampled path.

Is there, then, no hope for these way-side hearers?

and sparing our strength and toil, shall we leave them for soils more promising? By no means. The fallow ground may be broken up; the ploughshare can loosen the hardened, unproductive earth. Pulverized by the teeth of the harrow or the teeth of the frost, the barren track itself disappears; it passes up into the advanced classes, giving back the seed with which it is now entrusted, with a thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold increase. And this is true in the higher husbandry, in which we are permitted to be "God's fellow-workers." The heart which to-day is indifferent or repellent, to-morrow, chastened by sickness or torn by the ploughshare of some keen grief, may hail with eagerness the message it rejected and even scorned before. Amid the penury and shame of the far country, the father's house, from which he had wantonly turned, now comes to the prodigal like a sweet dream, and even its bread has all the aroma and sweetness of ambrosial food. No matter how disappointing the soil, we are to do our duty, which is to "sow beside all waters;" nor should any calculations of imaginary productiveness make us slack our hand or cast away our hope. When the Spirit is poured out from on high, even "the wilderness becomes as a fruitful field," and death itself becomes instinct with life.

"And other fell on the rock; and as soon as it grew it withered away, because it had no moisture." Here is a second quality of soil. It is not, however, a soil that is weakened by an intermixture of gravel or of stones, but rather a soil that is thinly spread upon the rock. It is good soil as far as it goes, but it is shallow. It receives the seed gladly, as if that were its one mission, as indeed it is; it gives the seed a hiding-place, throwing over it a mantle of earth, so that the

birds shall not devour it. It lays its warm touch upon the enveloping husk, as the Master once laid His finger upon the bier, and to the imprisoned life which was within it said, "Arise and multiply. Pass up into the sunlight, and give God's children bread." And the seed responds, obeys. The emerging life throws out its two wings—one downwards, as its roots clasp the soil; one upwards, as the blade, pushing the clods aside, makes for the light and the heavens that are above it. "Surely," we should say, if we read the future from the present merely, "the hundredfold is here. Pull down your barns and build greater, for never was seed received more kindly, never were the beginnings of life more auspicious, and never was promise so great." Ah that the promise should so soon be a disappointment, and the forecast be so soon belied! The soil has no depth. It is simply a thin covering spread over the rock. It offers no room for growth. The life it nourishes can be nothing more than an ephemeral life, which owns but a to-day, whose "to-morrow" will be in the oven of a burning heat. The growth is entirely superficial, for its roots come directly to the hard, impenetrable rock, which, yielding no support, but cutting off all supplies from the unseen reservoirs beneath, turns back the incipient life all starved and shrunken. The result is a sudden withering and decay. A foundling, left, not by some iron gate which the touch of mercy might open, but by a dead wall of cold, unresponsive stone, the plant throws up its arms into the air, in its vain struggle for life, and then wilts and droops, lying at last, a dead and shrivelled thing, on the dry bosom of the earth which had given it its untimely birth.

Such, says Jesus, are many who hear the word. Unlike those by the way-side, these do not reject it.

They listen, bending toward that word with attentive ears and eager hearts. Nay, they receive it with joy; it strikes upon their soul with the music of a new evangel. But the work is not thorough; it is superficial, external. They "have no root" in a deep and settled conviction, only a green blade of profession and of mock promise, and when the testing-time comes, as it comes to all, "the time of temptation," they fall away, or they "stand off," as the verb might be literally rendered.

In this second class we must place a large proportion of those who heard and who followed Jesus. There was something attractive about His manner and about His message. Again and again we read how they "pressed upon Him" to hear His words, the multitude hanging on His lips as the bees will cluster upon a honeyed leaf. Thousands upon thousands thus came within the spell of His voice, now wondering at His gracious words, and now stunned with astonishment, as they marked the authority with which He spoke, the compressed thunder that was in His tones. But in how many cases are we forced to admit the interest to be but momentary! It was with many—shall we say with most?—merely a passing excitement, the effervescence of personal contact. The words of Jesus came "as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice," and for the moment the hearts of the multitudes were set vibrating in responsive harmonies. But the music ceased when the Singer was absent. The impressions were not permanent, and even the emotions had soon passed away, almost from memory. St. John speaks of one sifting in Galilee when "many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him" (vi. 66), showing that with them at least it was an

attach-ment rather than an attachment that bound them to Himself. The bond of union was the hope of some personal gain, rather than the bond of a pure and deep affection. And so directly He speaks of His approaching death, of His "flesh and blood" which He shall give them to eat and to drink, like an icy breath from the north, those words chill their devotion, turning their zeal and ardour into a cold indifference, if not into an open hostility. And this same winnowing of Galilee is repeated in Judæa. We read of multitudes who escorted Jesus down the Mount of Olives, strewing His path with garments, giving Him a royal welcome to the "city of the Great King." But how soon a change "came o'er the spirit of their dream"! how soon the hosannahs died away! As a hawk in the sky will still in a moment the warbling of the birds, so the uplifted cross threw its cold shadow upon their hearts, drowning the brief hosannahs in a strange silence. The cross was the fan in the Master's hand, with which He "throughly purged His floor," separating the true from the false. It blew away into the deep Valley of Oblivion the chaff, the dead superficialities, the barren yawns, leaving as the residuum of the sifted multitudes a mere handful of a hundred and twenty names.

These *pro tem.* believers are indigenous to every soil. There never is a great movement afloat—philanthropic, political or spiritual—but numberless smaller craft are lifted up on its swell. For a moment they seem instinct with life, but having no propelling power in themselves, they drop behind, soon to be embedded in the mire. And especially is this true in the region of spiritual dynamics. In all so-called "revivals" of religion, when the Church rejoices in a deepened and quickened life, when a cooling zeal has been rewarmed at the heavenly

fires, and converts are multiplied, in the accessions which follow almost invariably will be found a proportion of what we may call "casuals." We cannot say they are counterfeits, for the work, as far as it goes, seems real, and the change, both in their thought and life, is clearly marked. But they are unstable souls, prone to drifting, their direction given in the main by the set of the current in which they happen to be. And so when they reach the point—which all must reach sooner or later—where two seas meet, the cross current of enticement and temptation bears hard upon them, and they make shipwreck of faith. Others, again, are led by impulse. Religion with them is mainly a matter of feeling. Overlooking the fact that the emotions are easily stirred, that they respond to the passing breath just as the sea ripples to the breeze, they substitute emotion for conviction, feeling for faith. But these have no foundation, no root, no independent life, and when the excitements on which they feed are withdrawn, when the emotion subsides, the high tide of fervour falling back to its mean sea-level, they lose heart and hope. They are even ready to pity themselves as the objects of an illusion. But the illusion was one of their own making. They set the pleasant before the right, delight before duty, comfort before Christ, and instead of finding their heaven in doing the will of God, no matter what the emotions, they sought their heaven in their own personal happiness, and so they missed both.

"They endure for a while." And of how many are these words true! Verily we must not count our fruits from the blossoms of spring, nor must we reckon our harvest in that easy, hopeful way of multiplying each seed, or even each blade, by the hundredfold, for the blade may be only a short-lived blade and nothing more.

"And other fell amidst the thorns; and the thorns grew with it, and choked it." Here is a third quality of soil in the ascending series. In the first, the trampled path, life was not possible; the seed could find not the least response. In the second there was life. The thinly sprinkled soil gave the seed a home, a rooting; but lacking depth of earth and the necessary moisture, the life was precarious, ephemeral. It died away in the blade, and never reached its fruitage. Now, however, we have a deeper, richer soil, with an abundance of vitality, one capable of sustaining an exuberant life. But it is not clean; it is already thickly sown with thorns, and the two growths running up side by side, the hardier gets the mastery. And though the corn-life struggles up into the ear, bearing a sort of fruit, it is a grain that is dwarfed and shrivelled, a mere husk and shell, which no leaven can transmute into bread. It brings forth fruit, as the exposition of the parable indicates, but it has not strength to complete its task; it does not ripen it, bringing the fruit "to perfection."

Such, says Jesus, is another and a large class of hearers. They are naturally capable of doing great things. Possessing strong wills, and a large amount of energy, they are just the lives to be fruitful, impressing themselves upon others, and so throwing their manifold influence down into the future. But they do not, and for the simple reason that they do not give to the word a whole heart. Their attentions and energies are divided. Instead of seeking "first the kingdom of God," making that the supreme quest of life, it is with them but one of many things to be desired and sought. Chief among the hindrances to a perfected growth and fruitfulness, Jesus mentions three; namely, cares, riches, and pleasures. By the "cares of life" we must under-

stand—interpreting the word by its related word in Matthew vi. 34—the anxieties of life. It is the anxious thought, mainly about the "to-morrow," which presses upon the heart as a sore and constant burden. It is the fearfulness and unrest of soul which gloom the spirit and shroud the life, making the Divine peace itself a fret and worry. And how many Christians find this to be the normal experience! They love God, they seek to serve Him; but they are weighted and weary. Instead of having the hopeful, buoyant spirit which rises to the crest of passing waves, it is a heart depressed and sad, living in the deeps. And so the brightness of their life is dimmed; they walk not "in the light, as He is in the light," but beneath a sky frequently overcast, their days bringing only "a little glooming light, much like a shade." And so their spiritual life is stunted, their usefulness impaired. Instead of having a heart "at leisure from itself," they are engrossed with their own unsatisfactory experiences. Instead of looking upwards to the heavens which are their own, or outwards upon the crying needs of earth, they look inward with frequent and morbid introspection; and instead of lending a hand to the fallen, that a brotherly touch might help them to rise, their hands find full employment in steadying the world, or worlds, of care which, Atlas-like, they are doomed to carry. Self-doomed, we should have said; for the Divine Voice invites us to cast "all our anxiety upon Him," assuring us that He careth for us, an assurance and an invitation which make our anxieties, the fret and fever of life, altogether superfluous.

Exactly the same effect of making the spiritual life incomplete, and so unproductive, is caused by riches and pleasures, or, as we might render the expression,

by the pursuit after riches or after pleasure. Not that the Scriptures condemn wealth in itself. It is, *per se*, of a neutral character, whether a blessing or a bane depends on how it is earned and how it is held. Nor do the Scriptures condemn legitimate modes and measures of business; they condemn waste and indolence, but they commend industry, diligence, thrift. But the evil is in making wealth the chief aim of life. It is deceptive, promising satisfaction which it never gives, creating a thirst which it is powerless to slake, until the desire, ever more greedy and clamorous, grows into a "love of money," a pure worship of Mammon. Religion and business may well go together, for God has joined them in one. Each keeping its proper place, religion first and most, and business a far-off second, together they are the centrifugal and centripetal forces that keep the life revolving steadily around its Divine centre. But let the positions be reversed; let business be the first, chief thought, let religion sink down to some second or third place, and the life swings farther and farther from its pivotal centre, into wildernesses of dearth and cold. To give due thought to earthly things is right; nay, we may give all diligence to make our earthly, as well as our heavenly calling sure; but when business gets imperious in its demands, swallowing up all our thought and energy, leaving no time for spiritual exercises or for personal service for Christ, then the religious life declines. Crowded back into the chance corners, with nothing left it but the brief interstices of a busy life, religion can do little more than maintain a profession; its helpfulness is, in the main, remitted to the past, and its fruitfulness is postponed to that uncertain nowhere of the Greek calends.

The same is true with regard to the pleasures of life.

The word "pleasure" is a somewhat infrequent word in the New Testament, and generally it is used of the lower, sensual pleasures. We are not obliged, however, to give the word its lowest meaning; indeed, the analogy of the parable would scarcely allow such an interpretation. Sinful pleasure would not check growth; it would simply prevent it, making a spiritual life impossible. We must therefore interpret the "pleasures" which retard the upward growth, and render it infertile, as the lawful pleasures of life, such as the delights of the eye and ear, the gratification of the tastes, the enjoyments of domestic or social life. Perfectly innocent and pure in themselves, purposely designed for our enjoyment, as St. Paul plainly intimates (1 Tim. vi. 17), they are pleasures which we have no right to treat with the stoic's disdain, nor with the ascetic's aversion. But the snare is in permitting these desires to step out of their proper place, in allowing them to have a controlling influence. As servants their ministry is helpful and benign; but if we make them "lords," then, like "the ill uses of a life," we find it difficult to put them down; they rather put us down, making us their thrall. To please God should be the one absorbing pursuit and passion of life, and wholly bent on this, if other pure enjoyments come in our way we may receive them thankfully. But if we make our personal gratification the aim, if our thoughts and plans are set on this rather than upon the pleasing of God, then our spiritual life is enfeebled and stifled, and the fruit we should bear shrivels up into chaff. Then we become selfish and self-willed, and the pure pleasures of life, which like Vestal Virgins minister within the temple of God, leading us ever to Him, turn round to burn perpetual incense before our enlarged and

exalted Self. He who stops to confer with flesh and blood, who is ever consulting his own likes and leanings, can never be an apostle to others.

"And other fell into the good ground, and grew, and brought forth fruit a hundredfold." Here is the highest quality of soil. Not hard, like the trampled path, nor shallow, like the covering of the rock, not preoccupied with the roots of other growths, this is mellow, deep, clean, and rich. The seed falls, not "by," or "in," or "among," but "into" it, while seed and soil together grow up in an affluence of life, and passing through the blade-age and the earing, it ripens into a harvest of a hundredfold. Such, says Jesus, are they who, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience. Here, then, we reach the germ of the parable, the secret of fruitfulness. The one difference between the saint and the sinner, between the hundredfold hearer and him whose life is spent in throwing out promises of a harvest which never ripens, is their different attitude towards the word of God. In the one case that word is rejected altogether, or it is a concept of the mind alone, an aurora of the Arctic night, distant and cold, which some mistake for the dawn of a new day. In the other the word passes through the mind into the deepest heart; it conquers and rules the whole being; it becomes a part of one's very self, the soul of the soul. "Thy word have I hid in my heart," said the Psalmist, and he who puts the Divine word there, back of all earthly and selfish voices, letting that Divine Voice fill up that most sacred temple of the heart, will make his outer life both beautiful and fruitful. He will walk the earth as one of God's seers, ever beholding Him who is invisible, speaking by life or lips in heavenly tones,

and by his own steadfast, upward gaze lifting the hearts and thoughts of men "above the world's uncertain haze." Such is the Divine law of life; the measure of our faith is the measure of our fruitfulness. If we but half believe in the promises of God or in the eternal realities, then the sinews of our soul are houghed, and there comes over us the sad paralysis of doubt. How can we bring forth fruit except we abide in Him? and how can we abide in Him but by letting His words abide in us? But having His words abiding in us, then His peace, His joy, His life are ours, and we, who without Him are poor, dead things, now become strong in His infinite strength, and fruitful with a Divine fruitfulness; and to our lives, which were all barren and dead, will men come for the words that "help and heal," while the Master Himself gathers from them His thirty, sixty, or hundredfold, the fruitage of a whole-hearted, patient faith.

Let us take heed, therefore, how we hear, for on the character of the hearing depends the character of the life. Nor is the truth given us for ourselves alone; it is given that it may become incarnate in us, so that others may see and feel the truth that is in us, even as men cannot help seeing the light which is manifest.

And so the parable closes with the account of the visit of His mother and brethren, who came, as St. Matthew informs us, "to take Him home;" and when the message was passed on to Him that His mother and His brethren wished to see Him, this was His remarkable answer, claiming relationship with all whose hearts vibrate to the same "word:" "My mother and My brethren are those which hear the word of God, and DO IT." It is the secret of the Divine life on earth; they hear, and they DO.

CHAPTER XV.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

IN considering the words of Jesus, if we may not be able to measure their depth or to scale their height, we can with absolute certainty discover their drift, and see in what direction they move, and we shall find that their orbit is an ellipse. Moving around the two centres, sin and salvation, they describe what is not a geometric figure, but a glorious reality, "the kingdom of God." It is not unlikely that the expression was one of the current phrases of the times, a golden casket, holding within it the dream of a restored Hebraism; for we find, without any collusion or rehearsal of parts, the Baptist making use of the identical words in his inaugural address, while it is certain the disciples themselves so misunderstood the thought of their Master as to refer His "kingdom" to that narrow realm of Hebrew sympathies and hopes. Nor did they see their error until, in the light of Pentecostal flames, their own dream disappeared, and the new kingdom, opening out like a receding sky, embraced a world within its folds. That Jesus adopted the phrase, liable to misconstruction as it was, and that He used it so repeatedly, making it the centre of so many parables and discourses, shows how completely the kingdom of God possessed both His mind and heart. Indeed,

so accustomed were His thoughts and words to flow in this direction that even the Valley of Death, "lying darkly between" His two lives, could not alter their course, or turn His thoughts out of their familiar channel; and as we find the Christ back of the cross and tomb, amid the resurrection glories, we hear Him speaking still of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

It will be observed that Jesus uses the two expressions "the kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of heaven" interchangeably. But in what sense is it the "kingdom of heaven"? Does it mean that the celestial realm will so far extend its bounds as to embrace our outlying and low-lying world? Not exactly; for the conditions of the two realms are so diverse. The one is the perfected, the visible kingdom, where the throne is set, and the King Himself is manifest, its citizens, angels, heavenly intelligences, and saints now freed from the cumbering clay of mortality, and for ever safe from the solicitations of evil. This New Jerusalem does not come down to earth, except in the vision of the seer, as it were in a shadow. And yet the two kingdoms are in close correspondence, after all; for what is the kingdom of God in heaven but His eternal rule over the spirits of the redeemed and of the unredeemed? what are the harmonies of heaven but the harmonies of surrendered wills, as, without any hesitation or discord, they strike in with the Divine Will in absolute precision? To this extent, then, at least, heaven may project itself upon earth; the spirits of men not yet made perfect may be in subjection to the Supreme Spirit; the separate wills of a redeemed humanity, striking in with the Divine Will, may swell the heavenly harmonies with their earthly music.

And so Jesus speaks of this kingdom as being "within you." As if He said, "You are looking in the wrong direction. You expect the kingdom of God to be set up around you, with its visible symbols of flags and coins, on which is the image of some new Cæsar. You are mistaken. The kingdom, like its King, is unseen; it seeks, not countries, but consciences; its realm is in the heart, in the great interior of the soul." And is not this the reason why it is called, with such emphatic repetition, "*the* kingdom," as if it were, if not the only, at any rate the highest kingdom of God on earth? We speak of a kingdom of Nature, and who will know its secrets as He who was both Nature's child and Nature's Lord? And how far-reaching a realm is that! from the motes that swim in the air to the most distant stars, which themselves are but the gateway to the unseen Beyond! What forces are here, forces of chemical affinities and repulsions, of gravitation and of life! What successions and transformations can Nature show! what infinite varieties of substance, form, and colour! what a realm of harmony and peace, with no irruptions of discordant elements! Surely one would think, if God has a kingdom upon earth, this kingdom of Nature is it. But no; Jesus does not often refer to that, except as He makes Nature speak in His parables, or as He uses the sparrows, the grass, and the lilies as so many lenses through which our weak human vision may see God. The kingdom of God on earth is as much higher than the kingdom of Nature as spirit is above matter, as love is more and greater than power.

We said just now how completely the thought of "the kingdom" possessed the mind and heart of Jesus. We might go one step farther, and say how completely

Jesus identified Himself with that kingdom. He puts Himself in its pivotal centre, with all possible naturalness, and with an ease that assumption cannot feign He gathers up its royalties and draws them around His own Person. He speaks of it as "My kingdom;" and this, not alone in familiar discourse with His disciples, but when face to face with the representative of earth's greatest power. Nor is the personal pronoun some chance word, used in a far-off, accommodated sense; it is the crucial word of the sentence, underscored and emphasized by a threefold repetition; it is the word He will not strike out, nor recall, even to save Himself from the cross. He never speaks of the kingdom but even His enemies acknowledge the "authority" that rings in His tones, the authority of conscious power, as well as of perfect knowledge. When His ministry is drawing to a close He says to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven;" which language may be understood as the official designation of the Apostle Peter to a position of pre-eminence in the Church, as its first leader. But whatever it may mean, it shows that the keys of the kingdom are His; He can bestow them on whom He will. The kingdom of heaven is not a realm in which authority and honours move upwards from below, the blossoming of "the people's will;" it is an absolute monarchy, an autocracy, and Jesus Himself is here King supreme, His will swaying the lesser wills of men, and rearranging their positions, as the angel had foretold: "He shall reign over the house of David for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Given Him of the Father it is (xxii. 29; i. 32), but the kingdom is His, not either as a metaphor, but really, absolutely, inalienably; nor is there admittance within

that kingdom but by Him who is the Way, as He is the Life. We enter into the kingdom, or the kingdom enters into us, as we find, and then crown the King, as we sanctify in our hearts "Christ as Lord" (1 Pet. iii. 15).

This brings us to the question of citizenship, the conditions and demands of the kingdom; and here we see how far this new dynasty is removed from the kingdoms of this world. They deal with mankind in groups; they look at birth, not character; and their bounds are well defined by rivers, mountains, seas, or by accurately surveyed lines. The kingdom of heaven, on the other hand, dispenses with all space-limits, all physical configurations, and regards mankind as one group, a unity, a lapsed but a redeemed world. But while opening its gates and offering its privileges to all alike, irrespective of class or circumstance, it is most eclective in its requirements, and most rigid in the application of its test, its one test of character. Indeed, the laws of the heavenly kingdom are a complete reversal of the lines of worldly policy. Take, for instance, the two estimates of wealth, and see how different the position it occupies in the two societies. The world makes wealth its *summum bonum;* or if not exactly in itself the highest good, in commercial values it is equivalent to the highest good, which is position. Gold is all-powerful, the goal of man's vain ambitions, the panacea of earthly ill. Men chase it in hot, feverish haste, trampling upon each other in the mad scramble, and worshipping it in a blind idolatry. But where is wealth in the new kingdom? The world's first becomes the last. It has no purchasing-power here; its golden key cannot open the least of these heavenly gates. Jesus sets it back, far back, in His estimate of

the good. He speaks of it as if it were an encumbrance, a dead weight, that must be lifted, and that handicaps the heavenly athlete. "How hardly," said Jesus, when the rich ruler turned away "very sorrowful," "shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" (xviii. 24); and then, by way of illustration, He shows us the picture of the camel passing through the so-called "needle's eye" of an Eastern door. He does not say that such a thing is impossible, for the camel could pass through the "needle's eye," but it must first kneel down and be stripped of all its baggage, before it can pass the narrow door, within the larger, but now closed gate. Wealth may have its uses, and noble uses too, within the kingdom—for it is somewhat remarkable how the faith of the two rich disciples shone out the brightest, when the faith of the rest suffered a temporary eclipse from the passing cross—but he who possesses it must be as if he possessed it not. He must not regard it as his own, but as talents given him in trust by his Lord, their image and superscription being that of the Invisible King.

Again, Jesus sets down vacillation, hesitancy, as a disqualification for citizenship in His kingdom. At the close of His Galilean ministry our Evangelist introduces us to a group of embryo disciples. The first of the three says, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest" (ix. 57). Bold words they were, and doubtless well meant, but it was the language of a passing impulse, rather than of a settled conviction; it was the coruscation of a glowing, ardent temperament. He had not counted the cost. The large word "whithersoever" might, indeed, easily be spoken, but it held within it a Gethsemane and a Calvary, paths of sorrow, shame, and death he was not prepared to face.

And so Jesus neither welcomed nor dismissed him, but opening out one part of his "whithersoever," He gave it back to him in the words, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." The second responds to the "Follow Me" of Christ with the request that he might be allowed first to go and bury his father. It was a most natural request, but participation in these funeral rites would entail a ceremonial uncleanness of seven days, by which time Jesus would be far away. Besides, Jesus must teach him, and the ages after him, that His claims were paramount; that when He commands obedience must be instant and absolute, with no interventions, no postponement. Jesus replies to him in that enigmatical way of His, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead: but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God;" indicating that this supreme crisis of his life is virtually a passing from death to life, a "resurrection from earth to things above." The last in this group of three volunteers his pledge, "I will follow Thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house" (ix. 61); but to him Jesus replies, mournfully and sorrowfully, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (ix. 62). Why does Jesus treat these two candidates so differently? They both say, "I will follow Thee," the one in word, the other by implication; they both request a little time for what they regard a filial duty; why, then, be treated so differently, the one thrust forward to a still higher service, commissioned to preach the kingdom, and afterwards, if we may accept the tradition that he was Philip the Evangelist, passing up into the diaconate; the other, unwelcomed and uncommissioned,

but disapproved as "not fit for the kingdom"? Why there should be this wide divergence between the two lives we cannot see, either from their manner or their words. It must have been a difference in the moral attitude of the two men, and which He who heard thoughts and read motives detected at once. In the case of the former there was the fixed, determined resolve, which the bier of a dead father might hold back a little, but which it could not break or bend. But Jesus saw in the other a double-minded soul, whose feet and heart moved in diverse, opposite ways, who gave, not his whole, but a very partial, self to his work; and this halting, wavering one He dismissed with the words of forecasted doom, "Not fit for the kingdom of God."

It is a hard saying, with a seeming severity about it; but is it not a truth universal and eternal? Are any kingdoms, either of knowledge or power, won and held by the irresolute and wavering? Like the stricken men of Sodom, they weary themselves to find the door of the kingdom; or if they do see the Beautiful Gates of a better life, they sit with the lame man, outside, or they linger on the steps, hearing the music indeed, but hearing it from afar. It is a truth of both dispensations, written in all the books; the Reubens who are "unstable as water" can never excel; the elder born, in the accident of years, they may be, but the birthright passes by them, to be inherited and enjoyed by others.

But if the gates of the kingdom are irrevocably closed against the half-hearted, the self-indulgent, and the proud, there is a sesame to which they open gladly. "Blessed are ye poor," so reads the first and great Beatitude: "for yours is the kingdom of God" (vi. 20); and beginning with this present realization, Jesus goes

on to speak of the strange contrasts and inversions the perfected kingdom will show, when the weepers will laugh, the hungry be full, and those who are despised and persecuted will rejoice in their exceeding great reward. But who are the "poor" to whom the gates of the kingdom are open so soon and so wide? At first sight it would appear as if we must give a literal interpretation to the word, reading it in a worldly, temporal sense; but this is not necessary. Jesus was now directly addressing His disciples (vi. 20), though, doubtless, His words were intended to pass beyond them, to those ever-enlarging circles of humanity who in the after-years should press forward to hear Him. But evidently the disciples were in no weeping mood to-day; they would be elated and joyful over the recent miracles. Neither should we call them "poor," in the worldly sense of that word, for most of them had been called from honourable positions in society, while some had even "hired servants" to wait upon and assist them. Indeed, it was not the wont of Jesus to recognize the class distinctions Society was so fond of drawing and defining. He appraised men, not by their means, but by the manhood which was in them; and when He found a nobility of soul—whether in the higher or the lower walks of life it made no difference—He stepped forward to recognize and to salute it. We must therefore give to these words of Jesus, as to so many others, the deeper meaning, making the "blessed" of this Beatitude, who are now welcomed to the opened gate of the kingdom, the "poor in spirit," as, indeed, St. Matthew writes it.

What this spirit-poverty is, Jesus Himself explains, in a brief but wonderfully realistic parable. He draws for us the picture of two men at their Temple devotions.

The one, a Pharisee, stands erect, with head uplifted, as if it were quite on a level with the heaven he was addressing, and with supercilious pride he counts his beads of rounded egotisms. He calls it a worship of God, when it is but a worship of self. He inflates the great "I," and then plays upon it, making it strike sharp and loud, like the *tom-tom* of a heathen fetish. Such is the man who fancies that he is rich toward God, that he has need of nothing, not even of mercy, when all the time he is utterly blind and miserably poor. The other is a publican, and so presumably rich. But how different his posture! With heart broken and contrite, self with him is a nothing, a zero; nay, in his lowly estimate it had become a minus quantity, less than nothing, deserving only rebuke and chastisement. Disclaiming any good, either inherent or acquired, he puts the deep need and hunger of his soul into one broken cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (xviii. 13). Such are the two characters Jesus portrays as standing by the gate of the kingdom, the one proud in spirit, the other "poor in spirit;" the one throwing upon the heavens the shadow of his magnified self, the other shrinking up into the pauper, the nothing that he was. But Jesus tells us that he was "justified," accepted, rather than the other. With nought he could call his own, save his deep need and his great sin, he finds an opened gate and a welcome within the kingdom; while the proud in spirit is sent empty away, or carrying back only the tithed mint and anise, and all the vain oblations Heaven could not accept.

"Blessed" indeed are such "poor;" for He giveth grace unto the lowly, while the proud He knoweth afar off. The humble, the meek, these shall inherit the

earth, ay, and the heavens too, and they shall know how true is the paradox, having nothing, yet possessing all things. The fruit of the tree of life hangs low, and he must stoop who would gather it. He who would enter God's kingdom must first become "as a little child," knowing nothing as yet, but longing to know even the mysteries of the kingdom, and having nothing but the plea of a great mercy and a great need. And are they not "blessed" who are citizens of the kingdom—with righteousness, peace, and joy all their own, a peace which is perfect and Divine, and a joy which no man taketh from them? Are they not blessed, thrice blessed, when the bright shadow of the Throne covers all their earthly life, making its dark places light, and weaving rainbows out of their very tears? He who through the strait gate of repentance passes within the kingdom finds it "the kingdom of heaven" indeed, his earthly years the beginnings of the heavenly life.

And now we touch a point Jesus ever loved to illustrate and emphasize, the manner of the kingdom's growth, as with ever-widening frontiers it sweeps outward in its conquest of a world. It was a beautiful dream of Hebrew prophecy that in the latter days the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of the Messiah, should overlap the bounds of human empires, and ultimately cover the whole earth. Looking through her kaleidoscope of ever-shifting but harmonious figures, Prophecy was never weary of telling of the Golden Age she saw in the far future, when the shadows would lift, and a new Dawn, breaking out of Jerusalem, would steal over the world. Even the Gentiles should be drawn to its light, and kings to the brightness of its rising; the seas should offer their abundance as

a willing tribute, and the isles should wait for and welcome its laws. Taking up into itself the petty strifes and jealousies of men, the discords of earth should cease; humanity should again become a unit, restored and regenerate fellow-citizens of the new kingdom, the kingdom which should have no end, no boundaries either of space or time.

Such was the dream of Prophecy, the kingdom Jesus sets Himself to found and realize upon earth. But how? Disclaiming any rivalry with Pilate, or with his imperial master, Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world," so lifting it altogether out of the mould in which earthly dynasties are cast. "This world" uses force; its kingdoms are won and held by metallic processes, tinctures of iron and steel. In the kingdom of God carnal weapons are out of place; its only forces are truth and love, and he who takes the sword to advance this cause wounds but himself, after the vain manner of Baal's priests. "This world" counts heads or hands; the kingdom of God numbers its citizens by hearts alone. "This world" believes in pomp and show, in outward visibilities and symbols; the kingdom of God cometh not "with observation;" its voices are gentle as a zephyr, its footsteps noiseless as the coming of spring. If man had had the ordering of the kingdom he would have summoned to his aid all kinds of portents and surprises; he would have arranged processions of imposing events; but Jesus likens the coming of the kingdom to a grain of mustard-seed cast into a garden, or to a handful of leaven hid in three *sata* of meal. The two parables, with minor distinctions, are one in their import, the leading thought common to both being the contrast between its ultimate growth and the smallness and obscurity of its begin-

nings. In both the recreative force is a hidden force, buried out of sight, in the soil or in the meal. In both the force works outward from its centre, the invisible becoming visible, the inner life assuming an outer, external form. In both we see the touch of life upon death; for left to itself, the soil never would be anything more than dead earth, as the meal would be nothing more than dust, the broken ashes of a life that was departed. In both there is extension by assimilation, the leaven throwing itself out among the particles of kindred meal, while the tree attracts to itself the kindred elements of the soil. In both there is the mediation of the human hand; but as if to show that the kingdom offers equal privilege to male and female, with like possibilities of service, the one parable shows us the hand of a man, the other the hand of a woman. In both there is a perfect work, a consummation, the one parable showing us the whole mass leavened, the other showing us the wide-spreading tree, with the birds nesting in its branches.

Such, in outline, is the rise and progress of the kingdom of God in the heart of the individual man, and in the world; for the human soul is the protoplasm, the germ-cell, out of which this world-wide kingdom is evolved. The mass is leavened only by the leavening of the separate units. And how comes the kingdom of God within the soul and life of man? Not with observation or supernatural portents, but silently as the flashing forth of light. Thought, desire, purpose, prayer—these are the wheels of the chariot in which the Lord comes to His temple, the King into His kingdom. And when the kingdom of God is set up "within you" the outer life shapes itself to the new purpose and aim, the writ and will of the King running

unhindered through every department, even to its outmost frontier, while thoughts, feelings, desires, and all the golden coinage of the heart bear, not, as before, the image of Self, but the image and superscription of the Invisible King—the "Not I, but Christ."

And so the honour of the kingdom is in our keeping, as the growths of the kingdom are in our hands. The Divine Cloud adjusts its pace to our human steps, alas, often far too slow! Shall the leaven stop with us, as we make religion a kind of sanctified selfishness, doing nothing but gauging the emotions and singing its little doxologies? Do we forget that the weak human hand carries the Ark of God, and pushes forward the boundaries of the kingdom? Do we forget that hearts are only won by hearts? The kingdom of God on earth is the kingdom of surrendered wills and of consecrated lives. Shall we not, then, pray, "Thy kingdom come," and living "more nearly as we pray," seek a redeemed humanity as subjects of our King? So will the Divine purpose become a realization, and the "morning" which now is always "somewhere in the world" will be everywhere, the promise and the dawn of a heavenly day, the eternal Sabbath!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MIRACLES OF HEALING.

IT is only natural that our Evangelist should linger with a professional as well as a personal interest over Christ's connection with human suffering and disease, and that in recounting the miracles of healing he should be peculiarly at home; the theme would be in such thorough accord with his studies and tastes. It is true he does not refer to these miracles as being a fulfilment of prophecy; it is left for St. Matthew, who weaves his Gospel on the unfinished warp of the Old Testament, to recall the words of Isaiah, how "Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases;" yet our physician-Evangelist evidently lingers over the pathological side of his Gospel with an intense interest. St. John passes by the miracles of healing in comparative silence, though he stays to give us two cases which are omitted by the Synoptists—that of the nobleman's son at Capernaum, and that of the impotent man at Bethesda. But St. John's Gospel moves in more etherial spheres, and the touches he chronicles are rather the touches of mind with mind, spirit with spirit, than the physical touches through the coarser medium of the flesh. The Synoptists, however, especially in their earlier chapters, bring the works of Christ into prominence, travelling, too very much over the same

ground, though each introduces some special facts omitted by the rest, while in their record of the same fact each Evangelist throws some additional colouring.

Grouping together the miracles of healing—for our space will not allow a separate treatment of each—our thought is first arrested by the variety of forms in which suffering and disease presented themselves to Jesus, the wideness of the ground, physical and psychical, the miracles of healing cover. Our Evangelist mentions fourteen different cases, not, however, as including the whole, or even the greater part, but rather as being typical, representative cases. They are, as it were, the nearer constellations, localized and named; but again and again in his narrative we find whole groups and clusters lying farther back, making a sort of Milky Way of light, whose thickly clustered worlds baffle all our attempts at enumeration. Such are the "women" of chap. viii. ver. 2, who had been healed of their infirmities, but whose record is omitted in the Gospel story; and such, too, are those groups of cures mentioned in chapters iv. 40, v. 15, vi. 19, and vii. 21, when the Divine power seemed to culminate, throwing itself out in a largesse of blessing, fairly raining down its bright gifts of healing like meteoric showers.

Turning now to the typical cases mentioned by St. Luke, they are as follows: the man possessed of an unclean demon; Peter's wife's mother, who was sick of a fever; a leper, a paralytic, the man with the withered hand, the servant of the centurion, the demoniac, the woman with an issue, the boy possessed with a demon, the man with a dumb demon, the woman with an infirmity, the man with the dropsy, the ten lepers, and blind Bartimæus. The list, like so many lines of dark meridians, measures

off the entire circumference of the world of suffering, beginning with the withered hand, and going on and down to that "sacrament of death," leprosy, and to that yet further deep, demoniacal possession. Some diseases were of more recent origin, as the case of fever; others were chronic, of twelve or eighteen years' standing, or lifelong, as in the case of the possessed boy. In some a solitary organ was affected, as when the hand had withered, or the tongue was tied by some power of evil, or the eyes had lost their gift of vision. In others the whole person was diseased, as when the fires of the fever shot through the heated veins, or the leprosy was covering the flesh with the white scales of death. But whatever its nature or its stage, the disease was acute, as far as human probabilities went, past all hope of healing. It was no slight attack, but a "great fever" which had stricken down the mother-in-law of Peter, the intensive adjective showing that it had reached its danger-point. And where among human means was there hope for a restored vision, when for years the last glimmer of light had faded away, when even the optic nerve was atrophied by the long disuse? and where, among the limited pharmacopœias of ancient times, or even among the vastly extended lists of modern times, was there a cure for the leper, who carried, burned into his very flesh, his sentence of death? No, it was not the trivial, temporary cases of sickness Jesus took in hand; but He passed into that innermost shrine of the temple of suffering, the shrine that lay in perpetual night, and over whose doorway was the inscription of Dante's "Inferno," "All hope abandon, ye who enter here!" But when Jesus entered this grim abode He turned its darkness to light, its sighs to songs, bringing hope

to despairing ones, and leading back into the light of day these captives of Death, as Orpheus is fabled to have brought back to earth the lost Eurydice.

And not only are the cases so varied in their character, and humanly speaking, hopeless in their nature, but they were presented to Jesus in such a diversity of ways. They are none of them arranged for, studied. They could not have formed any plan or routine of mercy, nor were they timed for the purpose of producing spectacular effects. They were nearly all of them impromptu, extemporary events, coming without His seeking, and coming often as interruptions to His own plans. Now it is in the synagogue, in the pauses of public worship, that Jesus rebukes an unclean devil, or He bids the cripple stretch out his withered hand. Now it is in the city, amid the crowd, or out upon the plain; now it is within the house of a chief Pharisee, in the very midst of an entertainment; while at other times He is walking on the road, when, without even stopping in His journey, He wills the leper clean, or He throws the gift of life and health forward to the centurion's servant, whom He has not seen. No times were inopportune to Him, and no places were foreign to the Son of man, where men suffered and pain abode. Jesus refused no request on the ground that the time was not well chosen, and though He did again and again refuse the request of selfish interest or vain ambition, He never once turned a deaf ear to the cry of sorrow or of pain, no matter when or whence it came.

And if we consider His methods of healing we find the same diversity. Perhaps we ought not to use that word, for there was a singular absence of method. There was nothing set, artificial in His way, but an

easy freedom, a beautiful naturalness. In one respect, and perhaps in one only, are all similar, and that is in the absence of intermediaries. There was no use of means, no prescription of remedies; for in the seeming exception, the clay with which He anointed the eyes of the blind, and the waters of Siloam which He prescribed, were not remedial in themselves; the washing was rather the test of the man's faith, while the anointing was a sort of "aside," spoken, not to the man himself, but to the group of onlookers, preparing them for the fresh manifestation of His power. Generally a word was enough, though we read of His healing "touch," and twice of the symbolic laying on of hands. And by-the-way, it is somewhat singular that Jesus made use of the touch at the healing of the leper, when the touch meant ceremonial uncleanness. Why does He not speak the word only, as He did afterwards at the healing of the "ten"? And why does He, as it were, go out of His way to put Himself in personal contact with a leper, who was under a ceremonial ban? Was it not to show that a new era had dawned, an era in which uncleanness should be that of the heart, the life, and no longer the outward uncleanness, which any accident of contact might induce? Did not the touching of the leper mean the abrogation of the multiplied bans of the Old Dispensation, just as afterwards a heavenly vision coming to Peter wiped out the dividing-line between clean and unclean meats? And why did not the touch of the leper make Jesus ceremonially unclean? for we do not read that it did, or that He altered His plans one whit because of it. Perhaps we find our answer in the Levitical regulations respecting the leprosy. We read (Lev. xiv. 28) that at the cleansing of the leper the priest was to dip his right

finger in the blood and in the oil, and put it on the ear, and hand, and foot of the person cleansed. The finger of the priest was thus the index or sign of purity, the lifting up of the ban which his leprosy had put around and over him. And when Jesus touched the leper it was the priestly touch; it carried its own cleansing with it, imparting power and purity, instead of contracting the defilement of another.

But if Jesus touched the leper, and permitted the woman of Capernaum to touch Him, or at any rate His garment, He studiously avoided any personal contact with those possessed of devils. He recognized here the presence of evil spirits, the powers of darkness, which have enthralled the weaker human spirit, and for these a word is enough. But how different a word to His other words of healing, when He said to the leper, "I will; be thou clean," and to Bartimæus, "Receive thy sight"! Now it is a word sharp, imperative, not spoken to the poor helpless victim, but thrown over and beyond him, to the dark personality, which held a human soul in a vile, degrading bondage. And so while the possessed boy lay writhing and foaming on the ground, Jesus laid no hand upon him; it was not till after He had spoken the mighty word, and the demon had departed from him, that Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up.

But whether by word or by touch, the miracles were wrought with consummate ease; there were none of those artistic flourishes which mere performers use as a blind to cover their sleight of hand. There was no straining for effect, no apparent effort. Jesus Himself seemed perfectly unconscious that He was doing anything marvellous or even unusual. The words of power fell naturally from His lips, like the falling of leaves

from the tree of life, carrying, wheresoever they might go, healing for the nations.

But if the method of the cures is wonderful, the unstudied ease and simple naturalness of the Healer, the completeness of the cures is even more so. In all the multitudes of cases there was no failure. We find the disciples baffled and chagrined, attempting what they cannot perform, as with the possessed boy; but with Jesus failure was an impossible word. Nor did Jesus simply make them better, bringing them into a state of convalescence, and so putting them in the way of getting well. The cure was instant and complete; "immediately" is St. Luke's frequent and favourite word; so much so that she who half an hour ago was stricken down with malignant fever, and apparently at the point of death, now is going about her ordinary duties as if nothing had happened, "ministering" to Peter's many guests. Though Nature possesses a great deal of resilient force, her periods of convalescence, when the disease itself is checked, are more or less prolonged, and weeks, or sometimes months, must elapse before the spring-tides of health return, bringing with them a sweet overflow, an exuberance of life. Not so, however, when Jesus was the Healer. At His word, or at the mere beckoning of His finger, the tides of health, which had gone far out in the ebb, suddenly returned in all their spring fulness, lifting high on their wave the bark which through hopeless years had been settling down into its miry grave. Eighteen years of disease had made the woman quite deformed; the contracting muscles had bent the form God made to stand erect, so that she could "in no wise lift herself up;" but when Jesus said, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity," and laid His hands upon her, in an

instant the tightened muscles relaxed, the bent form regained its earlier grace, for "she was made straight, and glorified God." One moment, with the Christ in it, was more than eighteen years of disease, and with the most perfect ease it could undo all the eighteen years had done. And this is but a specimen case, for the same completeness characterizes all the cures that Jesus wrought. "They were made whole," as it reads, no matter what the malady might be; and though disease had loosened all the thousand strings, so that the wonderful harp was reduced to silence, or at best could but strike discordant notes, the hand of Jesus has but to touch it, and in an instant each string recovers its pristine tone, the jarring sounds vanish, and body, "mind, and soul according well, awake sweet music as before."

But though Jesus wrought these many and complete cures, making the healing of the sick a sort of pastime, the interludes in that Divine "Messiah," still He did not work these miracles indiscriminately, without method or conditions. He freely placed His service at the disposal of others, giving Himself up to one tireless round of mercy; but it is evident there was some selection for these gifts of healing. The healing power was not thrown out randomly, falling on any one it might chance to strike; it flowed out in certain directions only, in ordered channels; it followed certain lines and laws. For instance, these circles of healing were geographically narrow. They followed the personal presence of Jesus, and with one or two exceptions, were never found apart from that presence; so that, many as they were, they would form but a small part of suffering humanity. And even within these circles of His visible presence we are not to suppose

that all were healed. Some were taken, and others were left, to a suffering from which only death would release them. Can we discover the law of this election of mercy? We think we may.

(1) In the first place, there must be the need for the Divine intervention. This perhaps goes without saying, and does not seem to mean much, since among those who were left unhealed there were needs just as great as those of the more favoured ones. But while the "need" in some cases was not enough to secure the Divine mercy, in other cases it was all that was asked. If the disease was mental or psychical, with reason all bewildered, and the firmaments of Right and Wrong mixed confusedly together, making a chaos of the soul, that was all Jesus required. At other times He waited for the desire to be evoked and the request to be made; but for these cases of lunacy, epilepsy, and demoniacal possession He waived the other conditions, and without waiting for the request, as in the synagogue (iv. 34) or on the Gadarene coast, He spoke the word, which brought order to a distracted soul, and which led Reason back to her Jerusalem, to the long-vacant throne.

For others the need itself was not sufficient; there must be the request. Our desire for any blessing is our appraisement of its value, and Jesus dispensed His gifts of healing on the Divine conditions, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." How the request came, whether from the sufferer himself or through some intercessor, it did not matter; for no request for healing came to Jesus to be disregarded or denied. Nor was it always needful to put the request into words. Prayer is too grand and great a thing for the lips to have a monopoly of it, and the deepest

prayers may be put into acts as well as into words, as they are sometimes uttered in inarticulate sighs, and in groans which are too deep for words. And was it not truest prayer, as the multitudes carried their sick and laid them down at the feet of Jesus, even had their voice spoken no solitary word? and was it not truest prayer, as they put themselves, with their bent forms and withered hands right in His way, not able to speak one single word, but throwing across to Him the piteous but hopeful look? The request was thus the expression of their desire, and at the same time the expression of their faith, telling of the trust they reposed in His pity and His power, a trust He was always delighted to see, and to which He always responded, as He Himself said again and again, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Faith then, as now, was the sesame to which all Heaven's gates fly open; and as in the case of the paralytic who was borne of four, and let down through the roof, even a vicarious faith prevails with Jesus, as it brings to their friend a double and complete salvation. And so they who sought Jesus as their Healer found Him, and they who believed entered into His rest, this lower rest of a perfect health and perfect life; while they who were indifferent and they who doubted were left behind, crushed by the sorrow that He would have removed, and tortured by pains that His touch would have completely stilled.

And now it remains for us to gather up the light of these miracles, and to focus it on Him who was the central Figure, Jesus, the Divine Healer. And (1) the miracles of healing speak of the knowledge of Jesus. The question, "What is man?" has been the standing question of the ages, but it is still unanswered,

or answered but in part. His complex nature is still a mystery, the eternal riddle of the Sphinx, and Œdipus comes not. Physiology can number and name the bones and muscles, can tell the forms and functions of the different organs; chemistry can resolve the body into its constituent elements, and weigh out their exact proportions; philosophy can map out the departments of the mind; but man remains the great enigma. Biology carries her silken clue right up to the primordial cell; but here she finds a Gordian knot, which her keenest instruments cannot cut, or her keenest wit unravel. Within that complex nature of ours are oceans of mystery which Thought may indeed explore, but which she cannot fathom, paths which the vulture eye of Reason hath not seen, whose voices are the voices of unknown tongues, answering each other through the mist. But how familiar did Jesus seem with all these life-secrets! how intimate with all the life-forces! How versed He was in etiology, knowing without possibility of mistake whence diseases came, and just where they looked! It was no mystery to Him how the hand had shrunk, shrivelling into a mass of bones, with no skill in its fingers, and no life in its cloyed-up veins, or how the eyes had lost their power of vision. His knowledge of the human frame was an exact and perfect knowledge, reading its innermost secrets, as in a transparency, knowing to a certainty what links had dropped out of the subtle mechanism, and what had been warped out of place, and knowing well just at what point and to what an extent to apply the healing remedy, which was His own volition. All earth and all heaven were without a covering to His gaze; and what was this but Omniscience?

(2) Again, the miracles of healing speak of the compassion of Jesus. It was with no reluctance that He wrought these works of mercy; it was His delight. His heart was drawn towards suffering and pain by the magnetism of a Divine sympathy, or rather, we ought to say, towards the sufferers themselves; for suffering and pain, like sin and woe, were exotics in His Father's garden, the deadly nightshade an enemy had sown. And so we mark a great tenderness in all His dealings with the afflicted. He does not apply the caustic of bitter and biting words. Even when, as we may suppose, the suffering is the harvest of earlier sin, as in the case of the paralytic, Jesus speaks no harsh reproaches; He says simply and kindly, "Go in peace, and sin no more." And do we not find here a reason why these miracles of healing were so frequent in His ministry? Was it not because in His mind Sickness was somehow related to Sin? If miracles were needed to attest the Divineness of His mission, there was no need of the constant succession of them, no need that they should form a part, and a large part, of the daily task. Sickness is, so to speak, something unnaturally natural. It results from the transgression of some physical law, as Sin is the transgression of some moral law; and He who is man's Saviour brings a complete salvation, a redemption for the body as well as a redemption for the soul. Indeed, the diseases of the body are but the shadows, seen and felt, of the deeper diseases of the soul, and with Jesus the physical healing was but a step to the higher truth and higher experience, that spiritual cleansing, that inner creation of a right spirit, a perfect heart. And so Jesus carried on the two works side by side; they were the two parts of His one and great salvation; and as He loved and pitied the sinner,

so He pitied and loved the sufferer; His sympathies all went out to meet him, preparing the way for His healing virtues to follow.

(3) Again, the miracles of healing speak of the power of Jesus. This was seen indirectly when we considered the completeness of the cures, and the wide field they covered, and we need not enlarge upon it now. But what a consciousness of might there was in Jesus! Others, prophets and apostles, have healed the sick, but their power was delegated. It came as in waves of Divine impulse, intermittent and temporary. The power that Jesus wielded was inherent and absolute, deeps which knew neither cessation nor diminution. His will was supreme over all forces. Nature's potencies are diffused and isolated, slumbering in herb or metal, flower or leaf, in mountain or sea. But all are inert and useless until man distils them with his subtle alchemies, and then applies them by his slow processes, dissolving the tinctures in the blood, sending on its warm currents the healing virtue, if haply it may reach its goal and accomplish its mission. But all these potencies lay in the hand or in the will of Christ. The forces of life all were marshalled under His bidding. He had but to say to one "Go," and it went, here or there, or anywhither; nor does it go for nought; it accomplishes its high behest, the great Master's will. Nay, the power of Jesus is supreme even in that outlying and dark world of evil spirits. The demons fly at His rebuke; and let Him throw but one healing word across the dark, chaotic soul of one possessed, and in an instant Reason dawns; bright thoughts play on the horizon; the firmaments of Right and Wrong separate to infinite distances; and out of the darkness a Paradise emerges, of beauty and light, where the new

son of God resides, and God Himself comes down in the cool and the heat of the days alike. What power is this? Is it not the power of God? is it not Omnipotence?

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES.

LUKE ix. 1-17.

THE Galilean ministry was drawing to a close, for the "great Light" which had risen over the northern province must now move southward, to set behind a cross and a grave. Jesus, however, is reluctant to leave these borders, amid whose hills the greater part of His life has been spent, and among whose composite population His greatest successes have been won, without one last effort. Calling together the Twelve, who hitherto have been Apostles in promise and in name rather than in fact, He lays His plans before them. Dividing the district into sections, so as to equalize their labours and prevent any overlapping, He sends them out in pairs; for in the Divine arithmetic two are more than twice one, more than the sum of the separate units by all the added force and strength of fellowship. They are to be the heralds of the new kingdom, to "preach the kingdom of God," their insignia no outward, visible badge, but the investiture of authority over all demons, and power over all diseases. Apostles of the Unseen, servants of the Invisible King, they must dismiss all worldly cares; they must not even make provision for their journey, weighting themselves with such *impedimenta* as wallets stored with

bread or changes of raiment. They must go forth in an absolute trust in God, thus proving themselves citizens of the heavenly kingdom, whose gates they open to all who will repent and step up into them. They may take a staff, for that will help rather than hinder on the steep mountain paths; but since the King's business requireth haste, they must not spend their time in the interminable salutations of the age, nor in going about from house to house; such changes would only distract, diverting to themselves the thought which should be centred upon their mission. Should any city not receive them, they must retire at once, shaking off, as they depart, the very dust from their feet, as a testimony against them.

Such were the directions, as Jesus dismissed the Twelve, sending them to reap the Galilean harvest, and at the same time to prepare them for the wider fields which after the Pentecost would open to them on every side. It is only by incidental allusions that we learn anything as to the success of the mission, but when our Evangelist says "they went throughout the villages, preaching the Gospel and healing everywhere," these frequent miracles of healing would imply that they found a sympathetic and receptive people. Nor were the impulses of the new movement confined to the lower reaches of society; for even the palace felt its vibrations, and St. Luke, who seems to have had private means of information within the Court, possibly through Chuza and Manaen, pauses to give us a kind of *silhouette* of the Tetrarch. Herod himself is perplexed. Like a vane, "that fox" swings round to the varying gusts of public opinion that come eddying within the palace from the excited world outside; and as some say that Jesus is Elias, and others "one of the old prophets,' while others aver that He is John himself, risen from

the dead, this last rumour falls upon the ears of Herod like alarming thunders, making him quiver like an aspen. "And he sought to see Jesus." The "conscience that makes cowards of us all" had unnerved him, and he longed by a personal acquaintance with Jesus to waive back out of his sight the apparition of the murdered prophet. Who Jesus might be did not much concern Herod. He might be Elias, or one of the old prophets, anything but John; and so when Herod did see Jesus afterwards, and saw that He was not the risen Baptist, but the Man of Galilee, his courage revived, and he gave Jesus into the hands of his cohorts, that they might mock Him with the faded purple.

What steps Herod took to secure an interview we do not know; but the verb indicates more than a wish on his part; it implies some plan or attempt to gratify the wish; and probably it was these advances of Herod, together with the Apostles' need of rest after the strain and excitements of their mission, which prompted Jesus to seek a place of retirement outside the bounds of Antipas. On the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and on the eastern bank of the Jordan, was a second Bethsaida, or "House of Fish" as the name means, built by Philip, and to which, in honour of Cæsar's daughter, he gave the surname of "Julias." The city itself stood on the hills, some three or four miles back from the shore; while between the city and the lake swept a wide and silent plain, all untilled, as the New Testament "desert" means, but rich in pasturage, as the "much grass" of John vi. 10 would show. This still shore offered, as it seemed, a safe refuge from the exacting and intrusive crowds of Capernaum, whose constant coming and going left

them no leisure so much as to eat; and bidding them launch the familiar boat, Jesus and the twelve sail away to the other side. The excited crowds, however, which followed them to the water's edge, are not so easily to be shaken off; but guessing the direction of the boat, they seek to head her off by a quick *detour* round the shore. And some of them do; for when the boat grates on the northern shingle some of the swift-footed ones are already there; while stretching back for miles is a stream of humanity, of both sexes and of all ages, but all fired with one purpose. The desert has suddenly grown populous.

And how does Jesus bear this interruption to His plans? Does He chafe at this intrusion of the people upon His quiet hours? Does He resent their importunity, calling it impertinence, then driving them from Him with a whip of sharp words? Not so. Jesus was accustomed to interruptions; they formed almost the staple of His life. Nor did He repulse one solitary soul which sought sincerely His mercy, no matter how unseasonable the hour, as men would read the hours. So now Jesus "received" them, or "welcomed" them, as it is in the R.V. It is a favourite word with St. Luke, found in his Gospel more frequently than in the other three Gospels together. Applied to persons, it means nearly always to receive as guests, to welcome to hospitality and home. And such is its meaning here. Jesus takes the place of the host. True, it is a desert place, but it is a part of the All-Father's world, a room of the Father's house, carpeted with grass and ablaze with flowers; and Jesus, by His welcome, transforms the desert into a guest-chamber, where in a new way He keeps the Passover with His disciples, at the same time entertaining His thousands of self-

bidden guests, giving to them truth, speaking of the kingdom of God, and giving health, healing "those that had need of healing."

It was toward evening, "when the day began to wear away," that Jesus gave to a bright and busy day its crowning benediction. The thought had already ripened into purpose, in His mind, to spread a table for them in the wilderness; for how could He, the compassionate One, send them to their homes famishing and faint? These poor, shepherdless sheep have put themselves into His care. Their simple, unproviding confidence has made Him in a sense responsible, and can He disappoint that confidence? It is true they have been thoughtless and improvident. They have let the enthusiasm of the hour carry them away, without making any provision of the necessary food; but even this does not check the flow of the Divine compassion, for Jesus proceeds to fill up their lack of thought by His Divine thoughtfulness, and their scarcity with His Divine affluence.

According to St. John, it was Jesus who took the initiative, as He put the test-question to Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" Philip does not reply to the "whence;" that may stand aside awhile, as in mathematical language he speaks to the previous question, which is their ability to buy. "Two hundred pennyworth of bread," he said, "is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little." He does not say how much would be required to satisfy the hunger of the multitude; his reckoning is not for a feast, but for a taste, to every one "a little." Nor does he calculate the full cost of even this, but says simply, "Two hundred pennyworth would *not* be sufficient." Evidently, in Philip's mind the two hundred

pence is the known quantity of the equation, and he works out his calculation from that, as he proves the impossibility of buying bread for this vast company anywhere. We may therefore conclude that the two hundred pence represented the value of the common purse, the purchasing power of the Apostolic community; and this was a sum altogether inadequate to meet the cost of providing bread for the multitude. The only alternative, as far as the disciples see, is to dismiss them, and let them requisition for themselves; and in a peremptory manner they ask Jesus to "send the multitude away," reminding Him of what certainly they had no need to remind Him, that they were here "in a desert place."

The disciples had spoken in their subjunctive, *non possumus*, way; it is now time for Jesus to speak, which He does, not in interrogatives longer, but in His imperative, commanding tone: "Give ye them to eat," a word which throws the disciples back upon themselves in astonishment and utter helplessness. What can they do? The whole available supply, as Andrew reports it, is but five barley loaves and two small fishes, which a lad has brought, possibly for their own refreshment. Five flat loaves of barley, which was the food of the poorest of the poor, and "two small fishes," as St. John calls them, throwing a bit of local colouring into the narrative by his diminutive word—these are the foundation repast, which Jesus asks to be brought to Himself, that from Himself it may go, broken and enlarged, to the multitude of guests. Meantime the crowd is just as large, and perhaps more excited and impatient than before; for they would not understand these "asides" between the disciples and the Master, nor could they read as yet His compassionate and

benevolent thought. It would be a pushing, jostling crowd, as these thousands were massed on the hill-side. Some are gathered in little groups, discussing the Messiahship; others are clustered round some relative or friend, who to-day has been wonderfully healed; while others, of the forward sort, are selfishly elbowing their way to the front. The whole scene is a kaleidoscope of changing form and colour, a perfect chaos of confusion. But Jesus speaks again: "Make them sit down in companies;" and those words, thrown across the seething mass, reduce it to order, crystallizing it, as it were, into measured and numbered lines. St. Mark, half-playfully, likens it to a garden, with its *parterres* of flowers; and such indeed it was, but it was a garden of the higher cult, with its variegated beds of humanity, a hundred men broad, and fifty deep.

When order was secured, and all were in their places, Jesus takes His place as the host at the head of the extemporized table, and though it is most frugal fare, He holds the barley loaves heavenward, and lifting up His eyes, He blesses God, probably in the words of the usual formula, "Blessed art Thou, Jehovah our God, King of the world, Who causeth to come forth bread from the earth." Then breaking the bread, He distributes it among the disciples, bidding them bear it to the people. It is not a matter of moment as to the exact point where the supernatural came in, whether it was in the breaking or the distributing. Somewhere a power which must have been Divine touched the bread, for the broken pieces strangely grew, enlarging rapidly as they were minished. It is just possible that we have a clue to the mystery in the tense of the verb, for the imperfect, which denotes continued action, would read, "He brake," or "He kept on breaking," from

which we might almost infer that the miracle was coincident with the touch. But whether so or not, the power was equal to the occasion, and the supply over and above the largest need, completely satisfying the hunger of the five thousand men, besides the off-group of women and children, who, though left out of the enumeration, were within the circle of the miracle, the remembered and satisfied guests of the Master.

It now remains for us to gather up the meaning and the practical lessons of the miracle. And first, it reveals to us the Divine pity. When Jesus called Himself the Son of man it was a title full of deep meaning, and most appropriate. He was the true, the ideal Humanity, humanity as it would have been without the warps and discolourations that Sin has made, and within His heart were untold depths of sympathy, the "fellow-feeling that makes man wondrous kind." To the haughty and the proud He was stern, lowering upon them with a withering scorn; to the unreal, the false, the unclean He was severity itself, with lightnings in His looks and terrible thunders in His "woes;" but for troubled and tired souls He had nothing but tenderness and gentleness, and a compassion that was infinite. Even had He not called the weary and heavy-laden to Himself, they would have sought Him; they would have read the "Come" in the sunlight of His face. Jesus felt for others a vicarious pain, a vicarious sorrow, His heart responding to it at once, as the delicately poised needle responds to the subtle sparks that flash in upon it from without. So here; He receives the multitude kindly, even though they are strangers, and though they have thwarted His purpose and broken in upon His rest, and as this stream of human life flows out

to Him His compassion flows out to them. He commiserates their forlorn condition, wandering like straying sheep upon the mountains; He gives Himself up to them, healing all that were sick, assuaging the pain or restoring the lost sense; while at the same time He ministers to a higher nature, telling them of the kingdom of God, which had come nigh to them, and which was theirs if they would surrender themselves to it and obey. Nor was even this enough to satisfy the promptings of His deep pity, but all-forgetful of His own weariness, He lengthens out this day of mercy, staying to minister to their lower, physical wants, as He spreads for them a table in the wilderness. Verily He was, incarnate, as He is in His glory, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

Again, we see the Divine love of order and arrangement. Nothing was done until the crowding and confusion had ceased, and even the Divine beneficence waits until the turbulent mass has become quiet, settled down into serried lines, the five thousand making two perfect squares. "Order," it is said, "is Heaven's first law;" but whether the first or the second, certain it is that Heaven gives us the perfection of order. It is only in the lawless wills of man that "time is broke, and no proportion kept." In the heavenly state nothing is out of place or out of time. All wills there play into each other with such absolute precision that life itself is a song, a *Gloria in Excelsis*. And how this is seen in all the works of God! What rhythmic motions are in the marches of the stars and the processions of the seasons! To everything a place, to everything a time; such is the unwritten law of the realm of physics, where Law is supreme, and anarchy is unknown. So in our earthly lives, on their secular and on their spiritual

side alike, order is time, order is strength, and he who is deficient in this grace should practise on it the more. Avoid Slovenliness; it is a distant relation of Sin itself. Arrange your duties, and do not let them crowd one upon the other. Set the greater duties, not abreast, but one behind the other, filling up the spaces with the smaller ones. Do not let things drift, or your life, built for carrying precious argosies, and accomplishing something, will break up into pieces, the flotsam and jetsam of a barren shore. In prayer be orderly. Arrange your desires. Let some come first, while others stand back in the second or the third row, waiting their turn. If your relations with your fellows have got a little disarranged, atwist, seek to readjust the disturbed relation. Oppose what is evil and mean with all your might; but if no principle is involved, even at the cost of a little feeling, seek to have things put square. To get things into a tangle requires no great skill; but he who would be a true artist, keeping the Divine pattern before him, and ever working towards it, if not up to it, may reduce the tangled skein to harmony, and like the Gobelin tapestry-makers, weave a life that is noble and beautiful, a life on which men will love to gaze.

Again, we see the Divine concern for little things. Abundance always tempts to extravagance and waste. And so here; the broken remnants of the repast might have been thrown away as of no account; but Jesus bade them, "Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost;" and we read they filled with the broken bread, which remained over and above to them that had eaten, twelve baskets full—and, by the way, the word rendered "basket" here corresponds with the frugal fare, for, made of willow or of wicker, it was of the coarsest

kind, used only by the poor. What became of the fragments, which outweighed the original supply, we do not read ; but though they were only the crumbs of the Divine bounty, and though there was no present use for them, Jesus would not allow them to be wasted.

But the true meaning of the narrative lies deeper than this. It is a miracle of a new order, this multiplying of the loaves. In His other miracles Jesus has wrought on the line of Nature, accelerating her slower processes, and accomplishing in an instant, by His mere volition, what by natural causes must have been the work of time, but which in the specific cases would have been purely impossible, owing to the enfeeblement of nature by disease. Sight, hearing, even life itself, come to man through channels purely natural; but Nature never yet has made bread. She grows the corn, but there her part ends, while Science must do the rest, first reducing the corn to flour, then kneading it into dough, and by the burning fires of the oven transmuting the dough to bread. Why does Jesus here depart from His usual order, creating what neither nature nor science can produce alone, but which requires their concurrent forces ? Let us see. To Jesus these visible, tangible things were but the dead keys His hand touched, as He called forth some deeper, farther-off music, some spiritual truth that by any other method men would be slow to learn. Of what, then, is this bread of the desert the emblem ? St. John tells us that when the miracle occurred "the Passover was nigh at hand," and this time-mark helps to explain the overcrowding into the desert, for probably many of the five thousand were men who were now on their way to Jerusalem, and who had stayed at Capernaum and the neighbouring cities for the night. This sup-

position, too, is considerably strengthened by the words of the disciples, as they suggest that they should go and "lodge" in the neighbouring cities and villages, which word implies that they were not residents of that locality, but passing strangers. And as Jesus cannot now go up to Jerusalem to the feast, He gathers the shepherdless thousands about Him, and keeps a sort of Passover in the open guest-chamber of the mountain-side. That such was the thought of the Master, making it an anterior sacrament, is evident from the address Jesus gave the following day at Capernaum, in which He passes, by a natural transition, from the broken bread with which He satisfied their physical hunger to Himself as the Bread come down from heaven, the "living Bread" as He called it, which was His flesh. There is thus a Eucharistic meaning in the miracle of the loaves, and this northern hill signals in its subtle correspondences on to Jerusalem, to another hill, where His body was bruised and broken "for our iniquities," and His blood was poured out, a precious oblation for sin. And as that Blood was typified by the wine of the first miracle at Cana, so now Jesus completes the prophetic sacrament by the miraculous creation of bread from the five seminal loaves, bread which He Himself has consecrated to the holier use, as the visible emblem of that Body which was given for us, men, women, and children alike, even for a redeemed humanity. Cana and the desert-place thus draw near together, while both look across to Calvary; and as the Church keeps now her Eucharistic feast, taking from the one the consecrated bread, and from the other the consecrated wine, she shows forth the Lord's death "till He come."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

THE Transfiguration of Christ marks the culminating point in the Divine life; the few remaining months are a rapid descent into the Valley of Sacrifice and Death. The story is told by each of the three Synoptists, with an almost equal amount of detail, and all agree as to the time when it occurred; for though St. Matthew and St. Mark make the interval six days, while St. Luke speaks of it as "about eight," there is no real disagreement; St. Luke's reckoning is inclusive. As to the locality, too, they all agree, though in a certain indefinite way. St. Matthew and St. Mark leave it indeterminate, simply saying that it was "a high mountain," while St. Luke calls it "the mountain." Tradition has long localised the scene upon Mount Tabor, but evidently she has read off her bearings from her own fancies, rather than from the facts of the narrative. To say nothing of the distance of Mount Tabor from Cæsarea Philippi—which, though a difficulty, is not an insuperable one, since it might easily be covered in less than the six intervening days—Tabor is but one of the group of heights which fringe the Plain of Esdraelon, and so one to which the definite article would not, and could not, be applied. Besides, Tabor now was crowned by a Roman fortress,

and so could scarcely be said to be "apart" from the strifes and ways of men, while it stood within the borders of Galilee, whereas St. Mark, by implication, sets his "high mountain" outside the Galilean bounds (ix. 30). But if Tabor fails to meet the requirements of the narrative, Mount Hermon answers them exactly, throwing its spurs close up to Cæsarea Philippi, while its snow-crowned peak shone out pure and white above the lesser heights of Galilee.

It is not an unmeaning coincidence that each of the Evangelists should introduce his narrative with the same temporal word, "after." That word is something more than a connecting-link, a bridge thrown over a blank space of days; it is rather, when taken in connection with the preceding narrative, the key which unlocks the whole meaning and mystery of the Transfiguration. "After these sayings," writes St. Luke. What sayings? Let us go back a little, and see. Jesus had asked His disciples as to the drift of popular opinion about Himself, and had drawn from Peter the memorable confession—that first Apostle's Creed—"Thou art the Christ of God." Immediately, however, Jesus leads down their minds from these celestial heights to the lowest depths of degradation, dishonour, and death, as He says, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up." Those words shattered their bright dream at once. Like some fearful nightmare, the foreshadow of the cross fell upon their hearts, filling them with fear, and gloom, and striking down hope, and courage, yea, even faith itself. It would almost seem as if the disciples were unnerved, paralyzed by the blow, and as if an atrophy had stolen over their hearts and lips alike; for the

next six days are one void of silence, without word or deed, as far as the records show. How shall their lost hope be recalled, or courage be revived? How shall they be taught that death does not end all—that the enigma was true of Himself, as well as of them, that He shall find His life by losing it? The Transfiguration is the answer.

Taking with Him Peter, John, and James—the three who shall yet be witnesses of His agony—Jesus retires to the mountain height, probably intending, as our Evangelist indicates, to spend the night in prayer. Keeping the midnight watch was nothing new to these disciples; it was their frequent experience upon the Galilean lake; but now, left to the quiet of their own thoughts, and with none of the excitements of the spoil about them, they yield to the cravings of nature and fall asleep. Awaking, they find their Master still engaged in prayer, all oblivious of earthly hours, and as they watch He is transfigured before them. The fashion, or appearance, of His countenance, as St. Luke tersely puts it, "became another," all suffused with a heavenly radiance, while His very garments became lustrous with a whiteness which was beyond the fuller's art and beyond the whiteness of the snow, and all iridescent, flashing and sparkling as if set with stars. Suddenly, ere their eyes have grown accustomed to the new splendours, two celestial visitants appear, wearing the glorious body of the heavenly life and conversing with Jesus.

Such was the scene upon the "holy mount," which the Apostles could never forget, and which St. Peter recalls with a lingering wonder and delight in the far-off after-years (2 Pet. i. 18). Can we push aside the outward draperies, and read the Divine thought and

purpose that are hidden within? We think we may. And—

1. We see the place and meaning of the Transfiguration in the life of Jesus. Hitherto the humanity of Jesus had been naturally and perfectly human; for though heavenly signs have, as at the Advent and the Baptism, borne witness to its super-humanity, these signs have been temporary and external, shining or alighting upon it from without. Now, however, the sign is from within. The brightness of the outer flesh is but the outshining of the inner glory. And what was that glory but the "glory of the Lord," a manifestation of the Deity, that fulness of the Godhead which dwelt within? The faces of other sons of men have shone, as when Moses stepped downwards from the mount, or as Stephen looked upwards to the opened heavens; but it was the shining of a reflected glory, like the sunlight upon the moon. But when the humanity of Jesus was thus transfigured it was a native glory, the inward radiance of the soul stealing through, and lighting up, the enveloping globe of human flesh. It is easy to see why this celestial appearance should not be the normal manifestation of the Christ; for had it been, He would no longer have been the "Son of man." Between Himself and the humanity He had come to redeem would have been a gulf wide and profound, while the Fatherhood of God would have been a truth lying back in the vistas of the unknown, a truth unfelt; for men only reach up to that Fatherhood through the Brotherhood of Christ. But if we ask why now, just for once, there should be this transfiguring of the Person of Jesus, the answer is not so evident. Godet has a suggestion which is as natural as it is beautiful. He represents the Transfiguration as the natural issue of

a perfect, a sinless life, a life in which death should have no place, as it would have had no place in the life of unfallen man. Innocence, holiness, glory—these would have been the successive steps connecting earth with heaven, an ever-upward path, across which death would not even have cast a shadow. Such would have been the path opened to the first Adam, had not Sin intervened, bringing Death as its wage and penalty. And now, as the Second Adam takes the place of the first, moving steadily along the path of obedience from which the first Adam swerved, should we not naturally look for that life to end in some translation or transfiguration, the body of the earthly life blossoming into the body of the heavenly? and where else so appropriately as here, upon the "holy mount," when the spirits of the perfected come forth to meet Him, and the chariot of cloud is ready to convey Him to the heavens which are so near? It is thus something more than conjecture—it is a probability—that had the life of Jesus been by itself, detached from mankind in general, the Transfiguration had been the mode and the beginning of the glorification. The way to the heavens, from which He was self-exiled, was open to Him from the mount of glory, but He preferred to pass up by the mount of passion and of sacrifice. The burden of the world's redemption is upon Him, and that eternal purpose leads Him down from the Transfiguration glories, and onwards to a cross and grave. He chooses to die, with and for man, rather than to live and reign without man.

But not only does the "holy mount" throw its light on what would have been the path of unfallen man, it gives us in prophecy a vision of the resurrection life. Compare the picture of the transfigured Christ, as

drawn by the Synoptists, with the picture, drawn by John himself, of the Christ of the Exaltation, and how strikingly similar they are! (Rev. i. 13-17). In both descriptions we have an affluence of metaphor and simile, which affluence was itself but the stammering of our weak human speech, as it seeks to tell the unutterable. In both we have a whiteness like the snow, while to portray the countenance St. John repeats almost verbatim St. Matthew's words, "His face did shine as the sun." Evidently the Christ of the Transfiguration and the Christ of the Exaltation are one and the same Person; and why do we blame Peter for speaking in such random, delirious words upon the mount, when John, by the glory of that same vision, in Patmos, is stricken to the ground as if dead, not able to speak at all? When Peter spoke, somewhat incoherently, about the "three tabernacles," it was not, as some aver, the random speech of one who was but half awake, but of one whose reason was dazzled and confused with the blinding glory. And so the Transfiguration anticipates the Glorification, investing the sacred Person with those same robes of light and royalty He had laid aside for a time, but which He will shortly assume again—the habiliments of an eternal re-enthronement.

2. Again, the holy mount shows us the place of death in the life of man. We read, "There talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elijah;" and as if the Evangelist would emphasize the fact that it was no apparition, existing only in their heated imagination, he repeats the statement (ver. 35) that they were "two men." Strange gathering—Moses, Elias, and Christ!—the Law in the person of Moses, the Prophets in the person of Elias, both doing homage to the Christ, who

was Himself the fulfilment of prophecy and law. But what the Evangelist seems to note particularly is the humanness of the two celestials. Though the earthly life of each ended in an abrupt, unearthly way, the one having a translation, the other a Divine interment (whatever that may mean), they have both been residents of the heavenly world for centuries. But as they appear to-day "in glory," that is, with the glorified body of the heavenly life, outwardly, visibly, their bodies are still human. There is nothing about their form and build that is grotesque, or even unearthly. They have not even the traditional but fictitious wings with which poetry is wont to set off the inhabitants of the sky. They are still "men," with bodies resembling, both in size and form, the old body of earth. But if the appearance of these "men" reminds us of earth, if we wait awhile, we see that their natures are very unearthly, not unnatural so much as supernatural. They glide down through the air with the ease of a bird and the swiftness of light, and when the interview ends, and they go their separate ways, these heavenly "men" gather up their robes and vanish, strangely and suddenly as they came. And yet they can make use of earthly supports, even the grosser forms of matter, planting their feet upon the grass as naturally as when Moses climbed up Pisgah or as Elijah stood in Horeb's cave.

And not only do the bodies of these celestials retain still the image of the earthly life, but the bent of their minds is the same, the set and drift of their thoughts following the old directions. The earthly lives of Moses and Elias had been spent in different lands, in different times; five hundred eventful years pushed them far apart; but their mission had been one. Both were

prophets of the Highest, the one bringing God's law down to the people, the other leading a lapsed people back and up to God's law. Yes, and they are prophets still, but with a nearer vision now. No longer do they gaze through the crimson lenses of the sacrificial blood, beholding the Promised One afar off. They have read the Divine thought and purpose of redemption; they are initiated into its mysteries; and now that the cross is close at hand, they come to bring to the world's Saviour their heavenly greetings, and to invest Him, by anticipation, with robes of glory, soon to be His for evermore.

Such is the apocalypse of the holy mount. The veil which hides from our dull eye of sense the hereafter was lifted up. The heavens were opened to them, no longer far away beyond the cold stars, but near them, touching them on every side. They saw the saints of other days interesting themselves in earthly events—in one event at least, and speaking of that death which they mourned and feared, calmly, as a thing expected and desired, but calling it by its new and softened name, a "departure," an "exodus." And as they see the past centuries saluting Him whom they have learned to call the Christ, "the Son of God," as the truth of immortality is borne in upon them, not as a vague conception of the mind, but by oral and ocular demonstration, would they not see the shadow of the coming death in a different light? would not the painful pressure upon their spirits be eased somewhat, if not, indeed, entirely removed? and—

> "The Apostles' heart of rock
> Be nerved against temptation's shock"?

Would they not more patiently endure, now that they

had become apostles of the Invisible, seers of the Unseen?

But if the glory of the holy mount sets in a fairer light the cross and grave of Christ, may we not throw from the mirror of our thought some of its light upon our lowlier graves? What is death, after all, but the transition into life? Retaining its earthly accent, we call it a "decease;" but that is true only of the corporeal nature, that body of "flesh and blood" which cannot inherit the higher kingdom of glory to which we pass. There is no break in the continuity of the soul's existence, not even one parenthetic hour. When He who was the Resurrection and the Life said, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise," that word passed on a forgiven soul directly to a state of conscious blessedness. From "the azure deep of air" does the eagle look regretfully upon the eyrie of its crag, where it lay in its unfledged weakness? or does it mourn the broken shell from which its young life emerged? And why should we mourn, or weep with unrestrained tears, when the shell is broken that the freed spirit may soar up to the regions of the blessed, and range the eternities of God? Paganism closed the story of human life with an interrogation-point, and sought to fill up with guesses the blank she did not know. Christianity speaks with clearer voice; hers is "a sure and certain hope," for He who "hath abolished death" hath "brought life and immortality to light." Earth's exodus is heaven's genesis, and what we call the end celestials call the beginning.

And not only does the mount speak of the certainties of the after-life, it gives, in a binocular vision, the likeness of the resurrection body, answering, in part, the standing question, "How are the dead raised up?"

The body of the heavenly life must have some correspondence with, and resemblance to, the body of our earthly life. It will, in a sense, grow out of it. It will not be something entirely new, but the old refined, spiritualized, the dross and earthliness all removed, the marks of care, and pain, and sin all wiped out. And more, the Transfiguration mount gives us indubitable proof that heaven and earth lie, virtually, close together, and that the so-called "departed" are not entirely severed from earthly things; they can still read the shadows upon earthly dials, and hear the strike of earthly hours. They are not so absorbed and lost in the new glories as to take no note of earthly events; nor are they restrained from visiting, at permitted times, the earth they have not wholly left; for as heaven was theirs, when on earth, in hope and anticipation, so now, in heaven, earth is theirs in thought and memory. They have still interests here, associations they cannot forget, friends who are still beloved, and harvests of influence they still may reap. With the absurdities and follies of so-called Spiritualism we have no sort of sympathy; they are the vagaries of weak minds; but even their eccentricities and excesses shall not be allowed to rob us of what is a truly Christian hope, that they who cared for us on earth care for us still, and that they who loved and prayed for us below love us none the less, and pray for us none the less frequently, now that the conflict with them is over, and the eternal rest begun. And why may not their spirits touch ours, influencing our mind and heart, even when we are not conscious whence those influences come? for are they not, with the angels, "ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation"? The Mount of Trans-

figuration does indeed stand "apart," for on its summit the paths of the celestials and of the terrestrials meet and merge; and it is "high" indeed, for it touches heaven.

3. Again, the holy mount shows us the place of death in the life of Jesus. How long the vision lasted we cannot tell, but in all probability the interview was but brief. What supreme moments they were! and what a rush of tumultuous thoughts, we may suppose, would fill the minds of the two saints, as they stand again on the familiar earth! But listen! They speak no word to revive the old-time memories; they bring no tidings of the heavenly world; they do not even ask, as they well might, the thousand questions concerning His life and ministry. They think, they speak, of one thing only, the "decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." Here, then, we see the drift of heavenly minds, and here we learn a truth which is wonderfully true, that the death of Jesus, the cross of Jesus, was the one central thought of heaven, as it is the one central hope of earth. But how can it be such if the life of Jesus is all we need, and if the death is but an ordinary death, an appendix, necessary indeed, but unimportant? Such is the belief of some, but such certainly is not the teaching of this narrative, nor of the other Scriptures. Heaven sets the cross of Jesus "in the midst," the one central fact of history. He was born that He might die; He lived that He might die. All the lines of His human life converge upon Calvary, as He Himself said, "For unto this hour came I into the world." And why is that death so all-important, bending towards its cross all the lines of Scripture, as it now monopolizes the speech of these two celestials? Why? There is but one answer

which is satisfactory, the answer St. Peter himself gives: "His own Self bare our sins in His body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness" (1 Pet. ii. 24). And so the Mount of Transfiguration looks towards the Mount of Sacrifice. It lights up Calvary, and lays a wreath of glory upon the cross.

We need not speak again of Peter's random words, as he seeks to detain the celestial visitants. He would fain prolong what to him is a Feast of Tabernacles, and he suggests the building of three booths upon the mountain slope—"one for Thee," putting his Lord first, "and one for Moses, and one for Elias." He makes no mention of himself or of his companions. He is content to remain outside, so that he may only be near, as it were on the fringe of the transfiguring glories. But what a strange request! what wandering, delirious words, almost enough to make celestials smile! Well might the Evangelist excuse Peter's random words by saying, "Not knowing what he said." But if Peter gets no answer to his request, and if he is not permitted to build the tabernacles, Heaven spreads over the group its canopy of cloud, that Shekinah-cloud whose very shadow was brightness; while once again, as at the Baptism, a Voice speaks out of the cloud, the voice of the Father: "This is My Son, My Chosen; hear ye Him." And so the mountain pageant fades; for when the cloud has passed away Moses and Elias have disappeared, "Jesus only" is left with the three disciples. Then they retrace their steps down the mountain side, the three carrying in their heart a precious memory, the strains of a lingering music, which they only put into words when the Son of man is risen from the dead; while Jesus turns, not reluc-

tantly, from the opened door and the welcome of Heaven, to make an atonement upon Calvary, and through the veil of His rent flesh to make a way for sinful man even into the Holiest.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

LUKE X. 25-37.

IT would scarcely have accorded with the traditions of human nature had the teachers of religion looked favourably upon Jesus. Stepping, as He did, within their domain, without any human ordination or scholastic authority, they naturally resented the intrusion, and when the teaching of the new Rabbi so distinctly contravened their own interpretation of the law their curiosity deepened into jealousy, and curdled at last into a virulent hate. The ecclesiastical atmosphere was charged with electricity, but it only manifested itself at first in the harmless play of summer lightning, the cross-fire of half-earnest and half-captious questions; later it was the forked lightning that struck him down into a grave.

We have no means of localizing, either in point of time or place, the incident here recorded by our Evangelist, and which, by the way, only St. Luke mentions. It stands by itself, bearing in its dependent parable of the Good Samaritan an exquisite and perfect flower, from whose deep cup has dropped the very nectar of the gods.

It was probably during one of His public discourses that a "certain lawyer," or scribe—for the two titles

are used interchangeably—"stood up and tempted Him." He sought to prove Him by questions, as the word means here, hoping to entrap Jesus amid the vagaries of Rabbinical tradition. "Teacher," said he, hiding his sinister motive behind a veil of courtesy and apparent candour, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Had the question been sincere, Jesus would probably have given a direct answer; but reading the under-current of his thought, which moved transversely to the surface-current of his speech, Jesus simply answered his question by asking another: "What is written in the Law? How readest thou?" With a readiness which implied a perfect familiarity with the Law, he replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." Some expositors have thought that the Evangelist here gives the summary of what was a lengthened conversation, and that Jesus Himself led the mind of the lawyer to join together these detached portions of Scripture—one from Deuteronomy vi. 5, and the other from Leviticus xix. 18. It is true there is a striking resemblance between the answer of the lawyer and the answer Jesus Himself gave subsequently to a similar question (Mark xii. 30, 31); but there is no necessity for us to apologize for the resemblance, as if it were improbable and unnatural. The fact is, as the narrative of Mark xii. plainly indicates, that these two sentences were held in general consent as the epitome of the Law, its first and its second commandment. Even the scribe assents to this as an axiomatic truth he has no wish to challenge. It will be observed that a fourth term is added to the three of the original, possibly on account of the Septuagint rendering, which translated the Hebrew "heart" by

"mind." Godet suggests that since the term "heart" is the most general term, denoting "in Scripture the central focus from which all the rays of the moral life go forth," that it stands in apposition to the other three, the one in its three particulars. This, which is the most natural interpretation, would refer the "mind" to the intellectual faculties, the "soul" to the emotional faculties, the sensibilities, and the "might" to the will, which rules all force; while by the "heart" is meant the unit, the "centred self," into which the others merge, and of which they form a part.

Jesus commended him for his answer: "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live"—words which brushed away completely the Hebraic figment of inherited life. That life was not something that should be reached by processes of loving. The life should precede the love, and should give birth to it: the love should grow out of the life, its blossoming flower.

Having the tables so turned upom himself, and wishing to "justify," or to put himself right, the stranger asks still another question: "And who is my neighbour?" doubtless hoping to cover his retreat in the smoke of a burning question. To our minds, made familiar with the thought of humanity, it seems as if a question so simple scarcely deserved such an elaborate answer as Jesus gave to it. But the thought of humanity had not yet possessed the world; indeed, it had only just come to earth, to be spoken by, and incarnate in, Him who was the Son of man. To the Jew the question of the lawyer was a most important one. The word "neighbour" could be spoken in a breath; but unwind that word, and it measures off the whole of our earthly life, it covers all our practical, every-day duties. It ran through the pages of the Law, the ark in which

the Golden Rule was hidden; or like a silent angel, it flashed its sword across life's forbidden paths. But if the Jew could not erase this broad word from the pages of the Law, he could narrow and emasculate its meaning by an interpretation of his own. And this they had done, making this Divine word almost of none effect by their tradition. To the Jewish mind "neighbour" was simply "Jew" spelt large. The only neighbourhood they recognized was the narrow neighbourhood of Hebrew speech and Hebrew sympathies. The Hebrew mind was isolated as their land, and all who could not frame their Shibboleths were barbarians, Gentiles, whom they were at perfect liberty to spoil, as with anathemas and swords they chased them over their Jordans. Jesus, however, is on the alert; and how wisely He answers! He does not declaim against the narrowness of Hebrew thought; He utters no denunciatory word against their proud and false exclusiveness. He quietly unfolds the word, spreading it out into an exquisite parable, that all coming times may see how beautiful, how Divine the word "neighbour" is.

He said, "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, which both stripped him, and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead." The parables of Jesus, though drawn from real life, had no local colouring. They grouped themselves around some well-known fact of nature, or some general custom of social life; and so their spirit was national or cosmopolitan, rather than local. Here, however, Jesus departs from His usual manner, giving to His parable a local habitation. It is the road which led steeply down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and which for centuries has been so infested with robbers or bandits as to earn for itself the darkly

ominous name of "the Bloody Way." Possibly that name itself is an outgrowth from the parable; but whether so or not, it is scarcely to be supposed that it had so evil a character in the days of Christ. As Jericho then was a populous city, and intimately connected with Jerusalem in its social and business life, the road would be much frequented. Indeed, the parable indicates as much; for Jesus, whose words were never untrue to nature or to history, represents His three travellers as all journeying singly; while the khan or "inn" shows, in its reflection, a constant stream of travel. Our anonymous traveller, however, does not find it so safe as he had anticipated. Attacked, in one of its dusky ravines, by a band of brigands, they strip him of his clothing, with whatever the girdle-purse might contain, and beating him out of sheer devilry, they leave him by the road-side, unable to walk, unable even to rise, a living-dying man.

"And by chance, a certain priest was going down that way; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side." As in a *tableaux vivants*, Jesus shows us the two ecclesiastics, who come in sight in the happy, coincidental way that Romance so delights in. They had probably just completed their "course" of Temple service, and were now going down to Jericho, which was a favourite residence of the priests, for the somewhat long interval their sacred duties allowed them. They had, therefore, no pressure of business upon them; indeed, the verb would almost imply that the priest was walking leisurely along. But they bring no help to the wounded man. Directly they see him, instead of being drawn to him by the attractions of sympathy,

something, either the shock or the fright, acts upon them as a centrifugal force, and sends them describing an arc of a circle around that centre of groans and blood. At any rate they "passed by on the other side," leaving behind them neither deed nor word of mercy, but leaving behind them a shadow of themselves which, while time itself lasts, will be vivid, cold, and repelling. It is just possible, however, that they do not deserve all the unmeasured censure which the critics and the centuries have given, and are still likely to give. It is very easy for us to condemn their action as selfish, heartless; but let us put ourselves in their place, alone in the lonely pass, with this proof of an imminent danger sprung suddenly upon us, and it is possible that we ourselves should not have been quite so brave as by our safe firesides we imagine ourselves to be. The fact is it needed something more than sympathy to make them turn aside and befriend the wounded man; it needed physical courage, and that of the highest kind, and this wanting, sympathy itself would not be sufficient. The heart might long to help, even when the feet were hastening away. A sudden inrush of fear, even of vague alarm, will sometimes drive us contrary to the drift of our sympathies, just as our feet are lifted and we ourselves carried onwards by a surging crowd.

Whether this be a correct interpretation of their conduct or not, it certainly harmonizes with the general attitude of Jesus towards the priesthood. The chief priests were always and bitterly hostile, but we have reasonable ground for supposing that the priests, as a body, looked favouringly upon Jesus. The bolts of terrible "woes" are hurled against Pharisees and scribes, yet Jesus does not condemn the priests in a

single word; while in that aftermath of the Pentecost the Temple courts yielded the richest harvests, as "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." If, then, Jesus now holds up the priesthood to execration, setting these ecclesiastics in the pillory of His parable, that the coming centuries may throw sharp words at them, it is certainly an exceptional mood. The sweet silence has curdled into acrid speech. But even here Jesus does not condemn, except, as it would seem, by implication, the conduct of the priest and Levite. They come into the parable rather as accessories, and Jesus makes use of them as a foil, to throw out into bolder relief the central figure, which is the Samaritan, and so to emphasize His central truth, which is the real answer to the lawyer's question, that "neighbour" is too broad, and too human, a word to be cut off and deliminated by any boundaries of race.

But in thus casting a mantle of charity around our priest and Levite, we must admit that the character is sometimes true even down to recent days. Ecclesiasticism and religion, alas! are not always synonyms. Revolted Israel sins and sacrifices by turns, and seeking to keep the balance in equal poise, she puts over against her multitude of sins her multitude of sacrifices. Religiousness may be at times but a cloak for moral laxity, and to some rite is more than right. There are those, alas! to-day, who wear the livery of the Temple, to whom religion is a routine mechanism of dead things, rather than the commerce of living hearts, who open with hireling hand the Temple gates, who chant with hireling lips how "His mercy endureth for ever," and then step down from their sacred Jerusalem, to toss justice and mercy to the winds, as they defraud the widow and oppress the poor.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." At first sight it would appear as if Jesus had weakened the narrative by a topographical inaccuracy, as if He had gone out of His way to place a Samaritan on the road to Jericho, which was altogether out of the line of Samaritan travel. But it is a deliberate purpose on the part of Jesus, and not a *lapsus linguæ*, that introduces this Samaritan; for this is the gist of the whole parable. The man who had fallen among the robbers was doubtless a Jew; for had it been otherwise, the fact would have been stated. Now, there was no question as to whether the word "neighbour" embraced their fellow-countrymen; the question was whether it passed beyond their national bounds, opening up lines of duty across the outlying world. It is therefore almost a necessity that the one who teaches this lesson should be himself an alien, a foreigner, and Jesus chooses the Samaritan as being of a race against which Jewish antipathies were especially strong, but for which He Himself had a special regard and warmest sympathy. Though occupying adjacent territory, the Jews and the Samaritans practically were far apart, antipodal races we might almost call them. Between them lay a wide and deep chasm that trade even could not bridge, and across which the courtesies and sympathies of life never passed. "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans," said the flippant woman of Samaria, as she voiced a jealousy and hatred which were as mutual as they were deep. But here, in this ideal Samaritan, is a noble exception. Though

belonging to a lowly and obscure race, his thoughts are high. The ear of his soul has so caught the rhythm of Divine harmonies that it does not hear longer the little lisping Shibboleths of earthly speech; and while the sympathies of smaller hearts flow like a stream down in their well-defined and accustomed channel, seldom knowing any overflow, save in some rare freshet of impulse and of feeling, the sympathies of the Samaritan moved outward like the currents of the wind, sweeping across all chasms and over all mountain heights of division, bearing their clouds of blessing anywhither as the need required. It makes no difference to him that the fallen man is of an alien race. He is a *man*, and that is enough; and he is down, and must be raised; he is in need, and must be helped. The priest and Levite thought first and most of themselves, and giving to the man but a brief and scared look, they passed on with a quickened pace. Not so with the Samaritan; he loses all thought of himself, and is perfectly oblivious to the danger he himself may be running. Upon his great soul he feels the pressure of this "must;" it runs along the tightened muscles of his arm, as he checks his steed. He himself comes down, dismounting, that he may help the man to rise. He opens his flask and puts his wine to the lips, that their groans may cease, or that they may be soothed down into inarticulate speech. The oil he has brought for his own food he pours upon the wounds, and when the man has sufficiently recovered he lifts him upon his own beast and takes him to the inn. Nor is this enough for his great heart, but continuing his journey on the morrow, he first arranges with his host that the man shall be well cared for, giving him two pence, which was the two days' wages of a labouring man, at the same time

telling him that he must not limit his attentions to the sum he pays in advance, but that if anything more should be needed he would pay the balance on his return. We do not read whether it was needed or not, for the Samaritan, mounting his steed, passes out of our hearing and out of our sight. Not quite out of our hearing, however, for Heaven has caught his gentle, loving words, and hidden them within this parable, that all coming times may listen to their music; nor out of our sight either, for his photograph was caught in the sunlight of the Master's speech; and as we turn over the pages of Inspiration there is no picture more beautiful than that of the nameless Samaritan, whom all the world calls "the Good," the man who knew so much better than his age what humanity and mercy meant.

In the new light the lawyer can answer his own question now, and he does; for when Jesus asks, "Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbour unto him that fell among the robbers?" he replies, with no hesitation, but with a lingering prejudice that does not care to pronounce the, to him, outlandish name, "He that showed mercy on him." The lesson is learned, the lesson of humanity, for the whole parable is but an amplification of the Golden Rule, and Jesus dismisses the subject and the scholar with the personal application, which is but a corollary of the proposition He has demonstrated, "Go thou and do likewise." Go and do to others as you would have them do to you, were the circumstances reversed and your places changed. Read off your duty, not from your own low standpoint merely, but in a binocular vision, as you put yourself in his place; so will you find that the line of duty and the line of beauty are one.

The practical lessons of the parable are easy to

trace, as they are of universal application. The first lesson it teaches is the lesson of humanity, the neighbourhood and brotherhood of man. It is a convenience, and perhaps a necessity, of human life, that the great mass of humanity should be broken up into fragments, sections, with differing customs, languages, and names. It gives to the world the stimulus of competition and helpful rivalries. But these distinctions are superficial, temporary, and beneath this diversity of speech and thought there is the deeper unity of soul. We emphasize our differences; we pride ourselves upon them; but how little does Heaven make of them! Heaven does not even see them. Our national boundaries may climb up over the Alps, but they cannot touch the sky. Those skies look down and smile on all alike, Divinely impartial in their gifts of beauty and of light. And how little of the provincial, or even national, there was about Jesus! Though He kept Himself almost entirely within the borders of the Holy Land, never going far from His central pivot, which was Jerusalem, and its cross, yet He belonged to the world, as the world belonged to Him. He called Himself the Son of man, at once humanity's flower, and humanity's Son and Saviour. And as over the cradle of the Son of man the far East and the far West together leaned, so around His cross was the meeting-place of the races. The three chief languages inscribed upon it proclaimed His royalty, while the cross itself, on which the Sacrifice for humanity was to be offered, was itself the gift of humanity at large, as Asia provided it, and Europe prepared it, and Africa, in the person of the Cyrenean, bore it. In the mind of Jesus, as in the purpose of God, humanity was not a group of fractions, but a unit one and indivisible, made of one blood, and by

one Blood redeemed. In the heart of Jesus there was the "enthusiasm of humanity," all-absorbing and complete, and that enthusiasm takes possession of us, a new force generated in our lives, as we approach in spirit the great Ideal Man.

The second lesson of the parable is the lesson of mercy, the beauty of self-sacrifice. It was because the Samaritan forgot himself that all the world has remembered and applauded him. It is because of his stoop of self-renouncing love that his character is so exalted, his memory so dear, and that his very name, which is a title without a name, floats down the ages like a sweet song. "Go and do thou likewise" is the Master's word to us. Discipline your heart that you may see in man everywhere a brother, whose keeper you are. Let fraternity be, not a theory only, but a realized fact, and then a factor of your life. Train your eye to watch for others' needs, to read another's woe. Train your soul to sympathy, and your hand to helpfulness; for in our world there is room enough for both. Bethesda's porches stretch far as our eye can reach, all crowded, too, with the sorrowing, the sick, and the sad, thick enough indeed, but not so close as that an angel's foot may not step between them, and not so sad but an angel's voice may soothe and cheer. He who lifts another's load, who soothes another's smart, who brightens a life that else would be dark, who puts a music within a brother's soul, though it be only for a passing moment, wakes even a sweeter music within his own, for he enters on earth into his Master's joy, the joy of a redeeming, self-sacrificing love.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TWO SISTERS.

LUKE x. 38-42.

AT first sight it appears as if our Evangelist had departed from the orderly arrangement of which he speaks in his prelude, in thus linking this domestic scene of Judæa with His northern Galilean journey, and to the casual glance this home-flower does certainly seem an exotic in *this* garden of the Lord. The strangeness, the out-of-placeness, however, vanishes entirely upon a nearer, closer view. If, as is probable, the parable of the Good Samaritan was spoken during that northward journey, its scene lies away in Judæa, in the dangerous road that sweeps down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Now, this road to Jericho lay through the village of Bethany, and in the Evangelist's mind the two places are intimately connected, as we see (chap. xix. vv. 1, 29); so that the idyll of Bethany would follow the parable of the Good Samaritan with a certain naturalness, the one recalling the other by the simple association of ideas. Then, too, it harmonizes so thoroughly with its context, as it comes between a parable on works and a chapter on prayer. In the one, man is the doer, heart and hand going out in the beautiful ministries of love; in the other, man is the receiver, waiting upon God, opening hand and heart for the inflow of Divine grace. In one it is Love in

action that we see; in the other it is Love at rest, at rest from activities of her own, in quest of further good. This is exactly the picture our Evangelist draws of the two sisters, and which might have served as a parable had it not been so plainly taken from real life. Perhaps, too, another consideration influenced the Evangelist, and one that is suggested by the studied vagueness of the narrative. He gives no clue as to where the little incident occurred, for the "certain village" might be equally appropriate in Samaria or Judæa; while the two names, Martha and Mary, apart from the corroboration of St. John's Gospel, would not enable us to localize the scene. It is evident that St. Luke wished to throw around them a sort of *incognito*, probably because they were still living when he wrote, and too great publicity might subject them to inconvenience, or even to something more. And so St. Luke considerately masks the picture, shutting off the background of locality, while St. John, who writes at a later date, when Jerusalem has fallen, and who is under no such obligation of reserve, fies the scene precisely; for there can be no doubt that the Mary and Martha of his Gospel, of Bethany, are the Martha and Mary of St. Luke; their very characters, as well as names, are identical.

It was in one of His journeys to the south, though we have no means of telling which, that He came to Bethany, a small village on the eastern slope of Olivet, and about three-quarters of an hour from Jerusalem. There are several indications in the Gospels that this was a favourite resort of Jesus during His Judæan ministry (Matt. xxi. 1; John viii. 1); and it is somewhat singular that the only nights that we read He spent in Jerusalem were the night in the garden and

the two nights He slept in its grave. He preferred the quiet haven of Bethany; and though we cannot with absolute certainty recognize the village home where Jesus had such frequent welcome, yet throwing the side-light of John xi. 5 upon the haze, it seems in part to lift; for the deep affection Jesus had for the three implies a close and ripened intimacy.

St. John, in his allusions to the family, makes Mary prominent, giving precedence to her name, as he calls Bethany "the village of Mary and her sister Martha" (John xi. 1). St. Luke, however, makes Martha the central figure of his picture, while Mary is set back in the shade, or rather in the sunshine of that Presence which was and is the Light of the world. It was, "Martha received Him into her house." She was the recognized head of the family, "the lady" in fact, as well as by the implication of her name, which was the native equivalent of "lady." It was she who gave the invitation to the Master, and on her devolved all the care of the entertainment, the preparation of the feast, and the reception of the guests; for though the change of pronoun in ver. 38 from "they" to "Him" would lead us to suppose that the disciples had gone another way, and were not with Him now, still the "much serving" would show that it was a special occasion, and that others had been invited to meet Jesus.

It is a significant coincidence that St. John, speaking (xii. 2) of another supper at Bethany, in the house of Simon, states that Martha "served," using the same word that Jesus addressed to her in the narrative of St. Luke. Evidently Martha was a "server." This was her forte, so much so that her services were in requisition outside her own house. Hers was a culinary

skill, and she delighted with her sleight of hand to effect all sorts of transformations, as, conjuring with her fire, she called forth the pleasures and harmonies of taste. In this case, however, she overdid it; she went beyond her strength. Perhaps her guests outnumbered her invitations, or something unforeseen had upset her plans, so that some of the viands were belated. At any rate, she was cumbered, distracted, "put about" as our modern colloquialism would have it. Perhaps we might say she was "put out" as well, for we can certainly detect a trace of irritability both in her manner and in her speech. She breaks in suddenly among the guests (the aorist participle gives the rustle of a quick movement), and in the hearing of them all she says to Jesus, "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me." Her tone is sharp, querulous, and her words send a deep chill across the table, as when a sea-fret drifts coldly inland. If Mary was in the wrong thus to sit at the feet of Jesus, Martha certainly was not in the right. There was no occasion to give this public reprimand, this round-hand rebuke. She might have come and secretly called her, as she did afterwards, on the day of their sorrow, and probably Mary would have risen as quickly now as then. But Martha is overweighted, ruffled; her feelings get the better of her judgment, and she speaks, out of the impatience of her heart, words she never would have spoken had she but known that Inspiration would keep their echoes reverberating down all the years of time. And besides, her words were somewhat lacking in respect to the Master. True, she addresses Him as "Lord;" but having done this, she goes off into an interrogative with an implied censure in it, and closes with an im-

perative, which, to say the least, was not becoming, while all through an undue emphasis is laid upon the first personal pronoun, the "me" of her aggrieved self.

Turning to the other sister, we find a striking contrast, for Mary, as our Evangelist puts it, "also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard His word." This does not imply any forwardness on her part, or any desire to make herself conspicuous; the whole drift of her nature was in the opposite direction. Sitting "at His feet" now that they were reclining at the table, meant sitting behind Him, alone amid the company, and screened from their too-curious gaze by Him who drew all eyes to Himself. Nor does she break through her womanly reserve to take part in the conversation; she simply "heard His word;" or "she kept listening," as the imperfect tense denotes. She put herself in the listening attitude, content to be in the shadow, outside the charmed circle, if she only might hear Him speak, whose words fell like a rain of music upon her soul. Her sister chided her for this, and the large family of modern Marthas—for feminine sentiment is almost entirely on Martha's side—blame her severely, for what they call the selfishness of her conduct, seeking her own enjoyment, even though others must pay the price of it. But was Mary so utterly selfish? and did she sacrifice duty to gratify her inclination? Not at all, and certainly not to the extent our Marthas would have us believe. Mary had assisted in the preparations and the reception, as the "also" of ver. 39 shows; while Martha's own words, "My sister did leave me to serve alone," themselves imply that Mary had shared the labours of the entertainment before taking her place at the feet of Jesus. The probability is that she had completed her task, and now that He who spake

as never man spake before was conversing with the guests, she could not forego the privilege of listening to the voice she might not hear again.

It is to Jesus, however, that we must go with our rivalry of claims. He is our Court of Equity. His estimate of character was never at fault. He looked at the essences of things, the soul of things, and not to the outward wrappings of circumstance, and He read that palimpsest of motive, the underlying thought, more easily than others could read the outward act. And certainly Jesus had no apology for selfishness; His whole life was one war against it, and against sin, which is but selfishness ripened. But how does Jesus adjust this sisterly difference? Does He dismiss the listener, and send her back to an unfinished task? Does He pass on to her Martha's warm reproof? Not at all; but He gently reproves the elder sister. "Martha, Martha," He said, as if her mind had wandered, and the iteration was necessary to call her to herself, "thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

It is easy to see from this where Jesus thought the blame should rest. It was Martha who had taken too much upon herself. Her generous heart had gone beyond her strength, and far beyond the need. Wishing to do honour to her Guest, studying to please Him, she had been over-lavish in her entertainment, until she had become worried—anxious, troubled, as Jesus said, the former word referring to the inner disquiet, the unrest of soul, and the latter to the outward perturbation, the tremor of the nerves, and the cloudiness that looked from her eyes. The fact was that Martha had misread the tastes of her Guest. She thought to

please Him by the abundance of her provision, the largeness of her hospitality; but for these lower pleasures of sense and of taste Jesus cared little. He had meat to eat that others knew not of, and to do the will of Him that sent Him was to Jesus more than any ambrosia or nectar of the gods. The more simple the repast, the more it pleased Him, whose thoughts were high in the heavenly places, even while His feet and the mortal body He wore touched lightly the earth. And so while Martha's motive was pure, her judgment was mistaken, and her eager heart tempted her to works of supererogation, to an excess of care which was anxiety, the fret and fever of the soul. Had she been content with a modest service, such as would have pleased her Guest, she too might have found time to sit at His feet, and to have found there an Elim of rest and a Mount of Beatitudes.

But while Jesus has a kind rebuke for Martha, He has only words of commendation for her sister, whom she has been so openly and sharply upbraiding. "Mary," He said, speaking the name Martha had not uttered, "hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." He answers Martha in her own language, her native tongue; for in speaking of Mary's choice as the "good part," it is a culinary phrase, the *parlance* of the kitchen or the table, meaning the choice bit. The phrase is in apposition with the one thing which is needful, which itself is the antithesis to the "many things" of Martha's care. What the "one thing" is of which Jesus speaks we cannot say with certainty, and almost numberless have been the interpretations given to it. But without going into them, can we not find the truest interpretation in the Lord's own words? We think we may, for in

the Sermon on the Mount we have an exact parallel to the narrative. He finds people burdened, anxious about the things of this life, wearying themselves with the interminable questions, "What shall we eat? or What shall we drink?" as if life had no quest higher and vaster than these. And Jesus rebukes this spirit of anxiety, exorcising it by an appeal to the lilies and the grass of the field; and summing up His condemnation of anxiety, He adds the injunction, "Seek ye His kingdom, and these things shall be added unto you" (xii. 31). Here, again, we have the "many things" of human care and strife contrasted with the "one thing" which is of supremest moment. First, the kingdom; this in the mind of Jesus was the *summum bonum*, the highest good of man, compared with which the "many things" for which men strive and toil are but the dust of the balances. And this was the choice of Mary. She sought the kingdom of God, sitting at the feet of Him who proclaimed it, and who was, though she knew it not as yet, Himself the King. Martha too sought the kingdom, but her distracted mind showed that that was not her only, perhaps not her chief quest. Earthly things weighed too heavily upon her mind and heart, and through their dust the heavenly things became somewhat obscured. Mary's heart was set heavenward. She was the listener, eager to know the will of God, that she might do it. Martha was so busied with her own activities that she could not give her thoughts to Christ; Mary ceased from her works, that so she might enter into His rest, setting the world behind her, that her undivided gaze might be upon Him who was truly her Lord. And so Jesus loved Martha, yet pitied and chided her, while He loved and commended Mary.

Nor was the "good part" ever taken from her, for again and again we find her returning to the feet of Jesus. In the day of their great sorrow, as soon as she heard that the Master had come and called her, she arose quickly, and coming to Jesus, though it was the bare, dusty ground, she fell at His feet, seeking strength and help where she before had sought light and truth. And once more: when the shadow of the cross came vividly near, when Simon gave the feast which Martha served, Mary sought those feet again, to pour upon them the precious and fragrant nard, the sweet odours of which filled all the house, as they have since filled all the world. Yes, Mary did not sit at the feet of Jesus in vain; she had learned to know Christ as few of the disciples did; for when Jesus said, "She has done it for My burying," He intends us to infer that Mary feels, stealing over her retiring but loving soul, the cold and awful shadow of the cross. Her broken alabaster and its poured-out spikenard are her unspoken ode to the Redeemer, her pre-dated homage to the Crucified.

And so we find in Mary the truest type of service. Hers was not always the passive attitude, receiving and never giving, absorbing and not diffusing. There was the service before the session; her hands had prepared and wrought for Christ before she placed herself at His feet, and the sacrifice followed, as she brought her costly gift, to the astonishment of all the rest, her sweet and healing balm for the wounds which were soon to follow.

The life that is all receptive, that has no active ministries of love, no waiting upon Christ in the person of His followers, is an unnatural, an unhealthy life, a piece of morbid selfishness which neither pleases God

nor blesses man. On the other hand, the life that is always busy, that is in a constant swirl of outward duties, flying here and there like the stormy petrel over the unresting waves, will soon weary or wear itself out, or it will grow into an automaton, a mechanism without a soul. Receiving, giving, praying, working—these are the alternate chords on which the music of our lives should be struck. Heavenward, earthward, should be the alternate looks—heavenward in our waiting upon God, and earthward in our service for man. That life shines the most and is seen the farthest which reflects most of the heavenly light; and he serves Christ the best who now sits humbly and prayerfully at His feet, and then goes forth to be a "living echo of His voice," breaking for Him the alabaster of a self-sacrificing love. As one has beautifully expressed it, "The effective life and the receptive life are one. No sweep of arm that does some work for God but harvests also some more of the truth of God and sweeps it into the treasury of the life."*

But if Mary gives us a type of the truest and best service, Martha shows us a kind of service which is only too common. She gave to Jesus a right loving welcome, and was delighted with the privilege of ministering to His wants; but the coming of Jesus brought her, not peace, but distraction—not rest, but worry. Her very service ruffled and irritated her, until mind and heart were like the tempestuous lake ere the spell of the Divine "Peace" fell upon it. And all the time the Christ was near, who could bear each burden, and still all the disquiet of the soul! But Martha was all absorbed in the thought of what she could do for Him,

* Phillips Brooks.

and she forgot how much more He could do for her, giving to her chafed spirit quietness and rest, even amid her toil. The Divine Peace was near her, within her home, but the hurryings of her restless will and her manifold activities effectually excluded that peace from her heart.

And how many who call themselves Christians are true Marthas, serving Christ, but feeling the yoke to chafe, and the burden to weight them! perhaps preaching to others the Gospel of rest and peace, and themselves knowing little of its experience and blessedness—like the camels of the desert, which carry their treasures of corn and sweet spices to others, and themselves feed on the bitter and prickly herbs. Ah, you are too much upon your feet! Cease for awhile from your own works, and let God work in you. Wait in His presence. Let His words take hold of you, and His love enthuse you; so will you find rest amid your toil, calmness amid the strife, and you will prove that the fret and the fever of life will all disappear at the touch of the living Christ.

CHAPTER XXI.

LOST AND FOUND.

LUKE xv.

IN this chapter we see how the waves of influence, moving outward from their Divine centre, touch the outermost fringe of humanity, sending the pulsations of new excitements and new hopes through classes Religion and Society both had banned. "Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto Him, for to hear Him." It was evidently a movement widespread and deep. The hostility of Pharisees and scribes would naturally give to these outcasts a certain bias in His favour, causing their hearts to lean towards him, while His words of hope fell upon their lives like the breaking of a new dawn. Nor did Jesus forbid their approach. Instead of looking upon it as an intrusion, an impertinence, the attraction was mutual. Instead of receiving them with a cold and scant courtesy, He welcomed them, receiving them gladly, as the verb of the Pharisees' murmur implies. He even mingled with them in social intercourse, with an acceptance, if not an interchange, of hospitality. To the Pharisaic mind, however, this was a flagrant lapse, a breach of the proprieties which was unpardonable and half criminal, and they gave vent to their disapprobation and disgust in the loud and scornful murmur, "This

man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." It is from this hard sentence of withering contempt, as from a prickly and bitter calyx, we have the trifoliate parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Man, the last of which is perhaps the crown and flower of all the parables. With minor differences, the three parables are really one, emphasizing, as they reiterate, the one truth how Heaven seeks after the lost of earth, and how it rejoices when the lost is found.

The first parable is pastoral: "What man of you," asks Jesus, using the *Tu quoque* retort, "having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" It is one of those questions which only need to be asked to be answered, an interrogative which is axiomatic and self-evident. Jesus tries to set his detractors in His place, that they may think His thoughts, feel His feelings, as they look out on the world from His standpoint; but since they cannot follow Him to these redemptive heights, He comes down to the lower level of their vision. "Suppose you have a hundred sheep, and one of them, getting separated from the rest, goes astray, what do you do? Dismissing it from your thought, do you leave it to its fate, the certain slaughter that awaits it from the wild beasts? or do you seek to minimize your loss, working it out by the rule of proportion as you ask, 'What is one to ninety-nine?' then writing off the lost one, not as a unit, but as a common fraction? No; such a supposition is incredible and impossible. You would go in search of the lost directly. Turning your back upon the ninety and nine, and turning your thoughts from them

too, you would leave them in their mountain pasture,* as you sought the lost one. Calling it by its name, you would climb the terraced hills, and awake the echoes of the wadies, until the flinty heart of the mountain had felt the sympathy of your sorrow, repeating with you the lost wanderer's name. And when at last you found it you would not chide or punish it; you would not even force it to retrace its steps across the weary distance, but taking compassion on its weakness, you would lift it upon your shoulders and bear it rejoicing home. Then forgetful of your own weariness, fatigue and anxiety swallowed up in the new-found joy, you would go round to your neighbours, to break the good news to them, and so all would rejoice together."

Such is the picture, warm in colour and instinct with life, Jesus sketches in a few well-chosen words. He delicately conceals all reference to Himself; but even the chromatic vision of the Pharisees would plainly perceive how complete was its justification of His own conduct, in mingling thus with the erring and the lost; while to us the parable is but a veil of words, through which we discern the form and features of the "Good Shepherd," who gave even His life for the sheep, seeking that He might save that which was lost.

The second, which is a twin parable, is from domestic life. As in the parables of the kingdom, Jesus sets beside the man with the mustard-seed the woman with her leaven, so here He makes the same distinction, clothing the Truth both in a masculine and a feminine dress. He asks again, "Or what woman" (He does not say "of you," for if women were present amongst

* The word rendered "wilderness" means any and unenclosed.

His hearers they would be in the background) "having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost." Much objection has been taken to this parable for its supposed want of naturalness and reality. "Is it likely," our objectors say, "that the loss of a small coin like a drachma, whose value was about sevenpence-halfpenny, could be the occasion of so much concern, and that its recovery should be enough to call forth the congratulations of all the village matrons? Surely that is not parable, but hyperbole." But things have a real as well as an intrinsic value, and what to others would be common and cheap, to its possessor might be a treasure beyond reckoning, with all the added values of association and sentiment. So the ten drachmas of the woman might have a history; they might have been a family heirloom, moving quietly down the generations, with whole poems, ay, and even tragedies, hidden within them. Or we can conceive of a poverty so dire and strait that even one small coin in the emergent circumstance might grow into a value far beyond its intrinsic worth. But the parable does not need all these suppositions to steady it and keep it from falling to the ground. When rightly understood it becomes singularly natural, the truth of truth, if such an essence can be distilled in human speech. The probable interpretation is that the ten drachmas were the ten coins worn as a frontlet by the women of the East. This frontlet was given by the bridegroom to the bride at the time of marriage, and like the ring of Western life, it was invested with a kind of sanctity. It must

be worn on all public occasions, and guarded with a jealous, sacred care; for should one of its pieces be lost, it would be regarded as an indication that the possessor had not only been careless, but also that she had been unfaithful to her marriage vow. Throwing, then, this light of Eastern custom upon the parable, how vivid and lifelike it becomes! With what intense eagerness would she seek for the missing coin! Lighting her lamp—for the house would be but dimly lighted with its open door and its small unglazed window—how carefully and almost tremblingly she would peer along its shelves, and sweep out the corners of her few rooms! and how great would be her joy as she saw it glistening in the dust! Her whole soul would go out after it, as if it were a living, sentient thing. She would clasp it in her hand, and even press it to her lips; for has it not taken a heavy care and sorrow from her heart? That one coin rising from the dust has been to her like the rising of another sun, filling her home with light and her life with melody; and what wonder that she hastens to communicate her joy, as, standing by her door, after the Eastern wont, she holds up the missing treasure, and calls on her neighbours and friends (the substantives are feminine now) to rejoice with her.

The third parable carries the thought still higher, forming the crown of the ascending series. Not only is there a mathematical progression, as the lost fraction increases from one-hundredth to one-tenth, and then to one-half of the whole, but the intrinsic value of the loss rises in a corresponding series. In the first it was a lost sheep, a loss which might soon be replaced, and which would soon be forgotten; in the second it was a lost coin, which, as we have seen, meant the loss

of what was more valuable than gold, even honour and character; while in the third it is a lost child. We call it the parable of the Prodigal Son; it might with equal propriety be called the Parable of the Bereaved Father, for the whole story crystallizes about that name, repeating it, in one form or another, no less than twelve times.

"A certain man," so begins this parabolic *Paternoster*, "had two sons." Tired of the restraints of home and the surveillance of the father's eye, the younger of them determined to see the world for himself, in order, as the sequel shows, that he might have a free hand, and give loose reins to his passions. With a cold, impertinent bluntness, he says to the father, whose death he thus anticipates, "Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me," a command whose sharp, imperative tone shows but too plainly the proud, masterful spirit of the youth. He respects neither age nor law; for though the paternal estate could be divided during the father's life, no son, much less the younger, had any right to demand it. The father grants the request, dividing "unto them," as it reads, "his living;" for the same line which marks off the portion of the younger marks out too that of the elder son, though he holds his portion as yet only in promise. Not many days after—for having found its wings, the foolish bird is in haste to fly—the youth gathers all together, and then takes his journey into a far country. The down grades of life are generally steep and short, and so one sentence is enough to describe this *descensus Averni*, down which the youth plunges so insanely: "He wasted his substance with riotous living," scattering it, as the verb means, throwing it away after low, illicit pleasures. "And when he

had spent all"—the "all" he had scrambled for and gathered a short while before—"there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want;" and so great were his straits, so remorseless the pangs of hunger, that he was glad to attach himself to a citizen of that country as swineherd, living out in the fields with his drove, like the swineherds of Gadara. But such was the pressure of the famine that his mere pittance could not cope with famine prices, and again and again he hungered to have his fill of the carob-pods, which were dealt out statedly and sparingly to the swine. But no man gave even these to him; he was forgotten, as one already dead.

Such is the picture Jesus draws of the lost man, a picture of abject misery and degradation. When the sheep wandered it strayed unwittingly, blindly, getting farther from its fellows and its fold even when bleating vainly for them. When the drachma was lost it did not lose itself, nor had it any consciousness that it had dropped out of its proper environment. But in the case of the lost man it was altogether different. Here it is a wilful perversity, which breaks through the restraints of home, tramples upon its endearments, and throws up a blighted life, scarred and pealed amid the husks and swine of a far country. And it is this element of perversity, self-will, which explains, as indeed it necessitates, another marked difference in the parables. When the sheep and the drachma were lost there was an eager search, as the shepherd followed the wanderer over the mountain gullies, and the woman with broom and lamp went after the lost coin. But when the youth is lost, flinging himself away, the father does not follow him, except in thought, and love, and prayer. He sits "still in the house," nursing a

bitter grief, and the work on the farm goes on just as usual, for the service of the younger brother would probably be not much missed. And why does not the father summon his servants, bidding them go after the lost child, bringing him home, if necessary, by force? Simply because such a finding would be no finding. They might indeed carry the wanderer home, setting down his feet by the familiar door; but of what use is that if his heart is still wayward and his will rebellious? Home would not be home to him; and with his heart in the far country, he would walk even in his father's fields and in his father's house as an alien, a foreigner. And so all embassies, all messages would be in vain; and even a father's love can do no more than wait, patiently and prayerfully, in hopes that a better spirit may yet come over him, and that some rebound of feeling may bring him home, a humbled penitent. The change comes at length, and the slow morning dawns.

When the photographer wishes to develop the picture that is hidden in the film of the sensitive plate he carries it to a darkened room, and bathed in the developing solution the latent image gradually appears, even to the minutest details. It was so here; for when in his extremest need, with the pinch of a fearful hunger upon him, and the felt darkness of a painful isolation surrounding him, there came into the prodigal's soul a sweet picture of the far-away home, the home which might still have been his but for his wantonness, but which is his now only in memory. It is true his first thoughts of that home were not very lofty; they only crouched with the dogs under the father's table, or hovered around the plentiful board of the servants, attracted by the "bread enough and to spare." But such

is the natural association of ideas; the carob-pods of the swine naturally suggest the bread of the servants, while this in turn opens up all the chambers of the father's house, reviving its half-faded images of happiness and love, and awaking all the sweet memories that sin had stifled and silenced. That it was so here, the lower leading up to the higher thought, is evident from the young man's soliloquy: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." The hunger for the servants' bread is all forgotten now, swallowed up in the hunger of the soul, as it pines for the father's presence and for the father's smile, longing for the lost Eden. The very name "father" strikes with a strange music upon his awakened and penitent soul, making him for the time half-oblivious to his present wretchedness; and as Memory recalls a bright but vanished past, Hope peoples the dark sky with a heavenly host, who sing a new Advent, the dawn of a heavenly day. An Advent? Perhaps it was an Easter rather, with a "resurrection from earth to things above," an Easter whose anthem, in songs without end, was, "I will arise and go to my father," that *Resurgam* of a new and holier life.

No sooner is the "I will" spoken than there is a reversing of all the wheels. The hands follow whither the heart has gone; the feet shake off the dust of the far country, retracing the steps they measured so foolishly and lightly before; while the eyes, washed by their bitter tears—

> "Not backward are their glances bent,
> But onward to the Father's house."

"And he arose and came to his father." He came to himself first; and having found that better self, he became conscious of the void he had not felt before. For the first time he realizes how much the father is to him, and how terrible the bereavement and loss he inflicted upon himself when he put between that father and himself the desert of an awful distance. And as the bright memories of other days flash up within his soul, like the converging rays of a borealis, they all turn towards and centre in the father. Servants, home, and loaves of bread alike speak of him whose very shadow is brightness to the self-orphaned child. He yearns for the father's presence with a strange and intense yearning; and could that presence be his again, even if he were nothing more than a servant, with but casual interviews, hearing his voice but in its commanding tones, he would be content and happy.

And so he comes and seeks the father; will the father relent and receive him? Can he overlook and forgive the waywardness and wantonness which have embittered his old age? Can he receive him back even as a servant, a child who has scorned his authority, slighted his love, and squandered his substance in riotous living? Does the father say, "He has made his own bed, and he must lie upon it; he has had his portion, even to the swept-up crumbs, and there is nothing left for him now"? No, for there is something left, a treasure which he might scorn, indeed, but which he could not throw away, even a heritage of love. And what a picture the parable draws of the love that hopeth and endureth all things! "But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." As the

moon in her revolutions lifts up the tides, drawing the deep oceans to herself, so do the unsounded depths of the father's heart turn towards the prodigal whose life has set, dropping out of sight behind wildernesses of darkness. Thought, prayer, pity, compassion, love flow out towards the attraction they can no longer see. Nay, it seems as if the father's vision were transfixed riveted to the spot where the form of his erring lad vanished out of sight; for no sooner has the youth come within sight of the home, than the father's eyes, made telescopic with love, discern him, and as if by intuition, recognize him, even though his attire be mean and tattered, and his step has no longer the lightness of innocence nor the firmness of integrity. It is, it is his child, the erring but now repenting child, and the pent-up emotions of the father's soul rush out as in a tumultuous freshet to meet him. He even "ran" to meet him, all forgetful of the dignity of years, and throwing himself upon his neck, he kissed him, not either with the cold kiss of courtesy, but with the warm, fervent kiss of love, as the intensive prefix of the verb implies.

So far this scene of reconciliation has been as a dumb show. The storm of emotion so interrupted the electric flow of quiet thought and speech that no word was spoken in the mutual embrace. When, however, the power of speech returns the youth is the first to break the silence. "Father," he said, repeating the words of his mental resolve when in the far country, "I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son." It is no longer the sense of physical need, but the deeper sense of guilt, that now presses upon his soul. The moral nature, which by the anodynes of sin had been thrown into a state of

coma, awakes to a vivid consciousness, and in the new awakening, in the broadening light of the new dawn, he sees one thing only, and that is his sin, a sin which has thrown its blackness over the wasted years, which has embittered a father's heart, and which cast its shadow even into heaven itself. Nor is it the conviction of sin only; there is a full and frank confession of it, with no attempt at palliation or excuse. He does not seek to gloss it over, but smiting his breast with bitter reproaches, he confesses his sin with "a humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart," hoping for the mercy and forgiveness he is conscious he does not deserve. Nor does he hope in vain. Even before the confession is completed, the absolution is spoken, virtually at least; for without allowing the youth to finish his sentence, in which he offers to renounce his sonship and to accept a menial position, the father calls to the servants, "Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry." In this peal of imperatives we detect the rapid beating of the father's heart, the loving, eager haste to wipe out all the sad marks that sin has left. In the luminous atmosphere of the father's love the youth is no more the prodigal; he is as one transfigured; and now that the chrysalis has left the mire, and crept up into the sunlight, it must have a dress befitting its new summer life, wings of gauze, and robes of rainbow hues. The best, or "the first robe" as it is in the Greek, must be brought out for him; a signet-ring, the pledge of authority, must be put upon his hand; shoes, the badge of freedom, must be found for the tired and bared feet; while for the merry-making which is extemporized, the domestic

festa which is the crown of these rejoicings, the fatted calf, which was in reserve for some high festival, must be killed. And all this is spoken in a breath, in a sort of bewilderment, the ecstasy of an excessive joy; and forgetting that the simple command is enough for servants, the master must needs tell out his joy to them: "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

If the three parables were all through coincident, the Parable of the Prodigal Son should close at this point, the curtain dropping over the festive scene, where songs, and music, and the rhythm of the dance are the outward and weak expressions of the father's joy over the son who comes back from the far country, as one alive from the dead. But Jesus has another purpose; He must not only plead the cause of the outcast and the low, setting open for them the door of mercy and of hope; He must also rebuke and silence the unreasoning murmur of the Pharisees and scribes—which He does in the picture of the Elder Brother. Coming from the field, the heir is surprised to find the whole house given up to an impromptu feast. He hears the sounds of merriment and music, but its strains fall strange and harsh upon his ear. What can it mean? Why was *he* not consulted? Why should his father thus take occasion of his absence in the fields to invite his friends and neighbours? The proud spirit chafes under the slight, and calling one of the servants, he asks what it all means. The answer is not reassuring, for it only perplexes and pains him the more: "Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound"—an answer which does but deepen his displeasure, turning his sullenness to anger. "And would not go in." They

may end the feast, as they began it, without him. The festive joy is something foreign to his nature; it awakes but feelings of repulsion, and all its music is to him a grating discord, a *Miserere*.

But let us not be too severe upon the elder brother. He was not perfect, by any means, but in any appraisement of his character there are certain veinings of worth and nobleness that must not be omitted. We have already seen how, in the division of the father's goods, when he divided unto them his living, while the younger took away his portion, and swiftly scattered it in riotous living, the elder brother took no advantage of the deed of gift. He did not dispossess the father, securing for himself the paternal estate. He put it back into his father's hands, content with the filial relation of dependence and obedience. The father's word was still his law. He was the dutiful son; and when he said, "These many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine," the boast was no exaggeration, but the statement of a simple truth. Compared with the life of the prodigal, the life of the elder brother had been consistent, conscientious, and moral. Where, then, was his failure, his lack? It was just here, in the lack of heart, the absence of affection. He bore the name of a son, but he carried the heart of a servant. His nature was servile, rather than filial; and while his hands offered a service unremitting and precise, it was the cold service of an impassive mechanism. Instead of love passing out in living heart-throbs, suffusing all the life with its warmth, and clothing it in its own iridescent colouring, it was only a metallic mainspring called "duty." The father's presence is not the delight to him; he does not once mention that tender name in which the repenting one finds such a

heaven; and when he draws the picture of his highest happiness, the feast of his earthly Walhalla, "my friends" are there, though the father is excluded. And so between the father and the elder brother, with all this seeming nearness, there was a distance of reserve, and where the voices of affection and of constant communion should have been heard there was too often a vacancy of silence. It takes a heart to read a heart; and since this was wanting in the elder brother, he could not know the heart of the father; he could not understand his wild joy. He had no patience with his younger brother; and had he received him back at all, it would have been with a haughty stiffness, and with a lowering in his looks, which should have been at once a rebuke for the past and a warning for the future. The father looked on his son's repentance; the elder brother did not regard the repentance at all; perhaps he had not heard of it, or perhaps he could not understand it; it was something that lay out of the plane of his consciousness. He saw the sin only, how the younger son had devoured his living with harlots; and so he was severe, exacting, bitter. He would have brought out the sackcloth, but nothing more; while as to the music and the fatted calf, they would appear to his loveless soul as an absurd anachronism.

But far removed as he is from the father's spirit, he is still his son; and though the father rejoices more over the younger than over the elder, as was but natural, he loves them both with an equal love. He cannot bear that there should be any estrangement now; and he even leaves the festive throng, and the son he has welcomed and robed, and going out, he begs, he entreats the elder brother to pass in, and to throw

himself into the general joy. And when the elder son complains that, with all his years of obedient, dutiful service, he has never had even a kid, much less a fatted calf, on which to feast his friends, the father says, lovingly, but chidingly, "Son"—or "Child," rather, for it is a term of greater endearment than the "son" he had just used before—"thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine. But it was meet to make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." He plays upon the "child" as upon a harp, that he may drive away the evil spirits of jealousy and anger, and that even within the servant-heart he may awake some chords, if only the far-off echoes of a lost childhood. He reminds him how vastly different their two positions are. For him there has been no break in their intercourse; the father's house has been his home; he has had the free range of all: to the younger that home has been nothing but a distant memory, with a waste of dreary years between. He has been heir and lord of all; and so completely have father and son been identified, their separate personalities merged the one in the other, that the possessive pronouns, the "mine" and the "thine," are used interchangeably. The younger returns penniless, disinherited by his own misdeed. Nay, he has been as one dead; for what was the far country but a vault of slimy things, the sepulchre of a dead soul? "And should we not make merry and be glad, when thy brother" (it is the antithesis to "thy son" of ver. 30, a mutual "thy") "comes back to us as one raised from the dead?"

Whether the father's pleading prevailed, or not, we are not told. We can but hope it did, and that the elder brother, with his asperities all dissolved, and his

jealousies removed, did pass within to share the general joy, and to embrace a lost brother. Then he too would know the sweetness of forgiveness, and taught by the erring but now forgiven one, he too would learn to spell out more correctly that deep word "father," the word he had stammered at, and perhaps misspelt before, as the fatherhood and the brotherhood became to him not ideas merely, but bright realities.

Gathering up now the lessons of the parables, they show us (1) the Divine grief over sin. In the first two this is the prominent thought, the sorrow of the loser. God is represented as losing that which is of worth to Him, something serviceable, and therefore valuable. In the third parable the same idea is suggested rather than stated; but the thought is carried farther, for now it is more than a loss, it is a bereavement the father suffers. The retreating form of the wanderer throws back its shadow across the father's home and heart, a shadow that congeals and stays, and that is darker than the shadow of Death itself. It is the Divine Grief, whose depths we cannot sound, and from whose mystery we must stand back, not one stone's cast, but many.

The parables show (2) the sad state of the sinner. In the case of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin we see his perfect helplessness to recover himself, and that he must remain lost, unless One higher than himself undertakes his cause, and "help is laid upon One that is mighty." It is the third parable, however, which especially emphasizes the downward course of sin and the deepening wretchedness of the sinner. The flowery path leads on to a valley of desolation. The way of transgressors is ever a downward path; and let an evil spirit possess a soul, it hurries him

directly down the steep place, where, unless the flight be checked, a certain destruction awaits him. Sin degrades and isolates. Want, sorrow, penury, and pain are but a part of its viperous brood, and he who plays with sin, calling it freedom, will find his rod blossom with bitter fruit, or he will see it grow into a serpent with poison in its fangs.

The parables show (3) God's willingness and eagerness to save. The long and eager search after the lost sheep and the lost coin show, though but imperfectly, the supreme efforts God makes for man's salvation. He is not left to wander unrebuked and unsought. There is no forbidden path along which men insanely rush, but some bright angel stands beside it, warning back the sinner, it may be with a drawn sword, some "terror of the Lord," or it may be with a cross, the sacrifice of an infinite love. Though He could send His armies to destroy, He sends His messengers to win us back to obedience and to love—Conscience, Memory, Reason, the Word, the Spirit, and even the well-beloved Son. Nor is the great search discontinued, until it has proved to be in vain.

The parables show (4) the eager interest Heaven takes in man's salvation, and the deep joy there is among the angels over his repentance and recovery. And so the three parables close with a *Jubilate*. The shepherd rejoices over his recovered sheep more than over the ninety and nine which went not astray; the woman rejoices over the one coin found more than over the nine which were not lost. And this is perfectly natural. The joy of acquisition is more than the joy of possession; and as the crest of the waves is thrown up above the mean sea-level by the alternate depths of depression, so the very sorrow and grief

over the loss and bereavement, now that the lost is found and the dead is alive, throw up the emotions beyond their mean level, up to the summits of an exuberant joy. And whether Jesus meant, by the ninety and nine just persons who needed no repentance, the unfallen intelligences of heaven, or whether, as Godet thinks, He referred to those who under the Old Covenant were sincere doers of the Law, and who found their righteousness therein (Deut. vi. 25), it is still true, and a truth stamped with a Divine "Verily," that more than the joy of Heaven over these is its joy over the sinner that repented, the dead who now was alive, and the lost who now was found!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ETHICS OF THE GOSPEL.

WHATEVER of truth there may be in the charge of "other-worldliness," as brought against the modern exponents of Christianity, such a charge could not even be whispered against its Divine Founder. It is just possible that the Church had been gazing too steadfastly up into heaven, and that she had not been studying the science of the "Humanities" as zealously as she ought, and as she has done since; but Jesus did not allow even heavenly things to obliterate or to blur the lines of earthly duty. We might have supposed that coming down from heaven, and familiar with its secrets, He would have much to say about the New World, its position in space, its society and manner of life. But no; Jesus says little about the life which is to come; it is the life which now is that engrosses His attention, and almost monopolizes His speech. Life with Him was not in the future tense; it was one living present, real, earnest, but fugitive. Indeed, that future was but the present projected over into eternity. And so Jesus, founding the kingdom of God on earth, and summoning all men into it, if he did not bring commandments written and lithographed, like Moses, yet He did lay down principles and rules of conduct, marking out, in all departments of human life, the

straight and white lines of duty, the eternal "ought." It is true that Jesus Himself did not originate much in this department of Christian ethics, and probably for most of His sayings we can find a symphony struck from the pages of earlier, and perhaps heathen moralists; but in the wide realm of Right there can be no new law. Principles may be evolved, interpreted; they cannot be created. Right, like Truth, holds the "eternal years;" and through the millenniums before Christ, as through the millenniums after, Conscience, that "ethical intellect" which speaks to all men if they will but draw near to her Sinai and listen, spoke to some in clear, authoritative tones. But if Jesus did no more, He gathered up the "broken lights" of earth, the intermittent flashes which had played on the horizon before, into one steady electric beam, which lights up our human life outward to its farthest reach, and onward to its farthest goal.

In the mind of Jesus conduct was the outward and visible expression of some inner invisible force. As our earth moves round its elliptic in obedience to the subtle attractions of other outlying worlds, so the orbits of human lives, whether symmetrical or eccentric, are determined mainly by the two forces' Character and Circumstance. Conduct is character in motion; for men do what they themselves are, *i.e.* as far as circumstances will allow. And it is just at this point the ethical teaching of Jesus begins. He recognizes the *imperium in imperio*, that hidden world of thought, feeling, sentiment, and desire which, itself invisible, is the mould in which things visible are cast. And so Jesus, in His influence upon men, worked outward from within. He sought, not reform, but regeneration, moulding the life by changing the character; for, to

use His own figure, how could the thorn produce grapes, or the thistle figs?

And so when Jesus was asked, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He gave an answer which at first sight seemed to ignore the question entirely. He said no word about "doing," but threw the questioner back upon "being," asking what was written in the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (x. 27). And as Jesus here makes Love the condition of eternal life, its *sine qua non*, so He makes it the one all-embracing duty, the fulfilling of the law. If a man love God supremely, and his neighbour as himself, he cannot do more; for all other commandments are included in these, the sub-sections of the greater law. Jesus thus sought to create a new force, hiding it within the heart, as the mainspring of duty, providing for that duty both aim and inspiration. We call it a "new" force, and such it was practically; for though it was, in a way, embedded in their law, it was mainly as a dead letter, so much so that when Jesus bade His disciples to "love one another" He called it a "new commandment." Here, then, we find what is at once the rule of conduct and its motive. In the new system of ethics, as taught and enforced by Jesus, and illustrated by His life, the Law of Love was to be supreme. It was to be to the moral world what gravitation is to the natural, a silent but mighty and all-pervasive force, throwing its spell upon the isolated actions of the common day, giving impulse and direction to the whole current of life, ruling alike the little eddies of thought and the wider sweeps of benevolent activities. To Jesus "the soul of improvement was the

improvement of the soul." He laid His hand upon the heart's innermost shrine, building up that unseen temple four-square, like the city of the Apocalypse, and lighting up all its windows with the warm, iridescent light of love.

With this, then, as the foundation-tone, running through all the spaces and along all the lines of life, the thoughts, desires, words, and acts must all harmonize with love; and if they do not, if they strike a note that is foreign to its key-tone, it breaks the harmony at once, throwing jars and discords into the music. Such a breach of the harmonic law would be called a mistake, but when it is a breach of Christ's moral law it is more than a mistake, it is a wrong.

Before passing to the outer life Jesus pauses, in this Gospel, to correct certain dissonances of mind and soul, of thought and feeling, which put us in a wrong attitude towards our fellows. First of all, He forbids us to sit in judgment upon others. He says, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: and condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned" (vi. 37). This does not mean that we close our eyes with a voluntary blindness, working our way through life like moles; nor does it mean that we keep our opinions in a state of flux, not allowing them to crystallize into thought, or to harden into the leaden alphabets of human speech. There is within us all a moral sense, a miniature Sinai, and we can no more suppress its thunders or sheath its lightnings than we can hush the breakers of the shore into silence, or suppress the play of the Northern Lights. But in that unconscious judgment we pass upon the actions of others, with our condemnation of the wrong, we pass our sentence upon the wrong-doer, mentally ejecting him from the courtesies and sympathies of life, and

if we allow him to live at all, compelling him to live apart, as a moral incurable. And so, with our hatred of the sin, we learn to hate the sinner, and calling from him both our charities and our hopes, we hurl him down into some little Gehenna of our own. But it is exactly this feeling, this kind of judgment, the Law of Love condemns. We may "hate the sin, and yet the sinner love," keeping him still within the circle of our sympathies and our hopes. It is not meet that we should be merciless who have ourselves experienced so much of mercy; nor is it for us to hale others off to prison, or ruthlessly to exact the uttermost farthing, when we ourselves at the very best are erring and unfaithful servants, standing so much and so often in need of forgiveness.

But there is another "judging" that the command of Christ condemns, and that is the hasty and the false judgments we pass on the motives and lives of others. How apt we are to depreciate the worth of others who do not happen to belong to our circle! We look so intently for their faults and foibles that we become blind to their excellences. We forget that there is some good in every person, some that we can see if we only look, and we may be always sure that there is some we cannot see. We should not prejudge. We should not form our opinion upon an *ex parte* statement. We should not leave the heart too open to the flying germs of rumour, and we should discount heavily any damaging, disparaging statement. We should not allow ourselves to draw too many inferences, for he who is given to drawing inferences draws largely on his imagination. We should think slowly in our judgment of others, for he who leaps to conclusions generally takes his leap in the dark. We should learn to wait for

the second thoughts, for they are often truer than the first. Nor is it wise to use too much "the spur of the moment;" it is a sharp weapon, and is apt to cut both ways. We should not interpret others' motives by our own feelings, nor should we "suppose" too much. Above all, we should be charitable, judging of others as we judge ourselves. Perhaps the beam that is in a brother's eye is but the magnified mote that is in our own. It is better to learn the art of appreciating than that of depreciating; for though the one is easy, and the other difficult, yet he who looks for the good, and exalts the good, will make the very wilderness to blossom and be glad; while he who depreciates everything outside his own little self impoverishes life, and makes the very garden of the Lord one arid, barren desert.

Again, Jesus condemns pride, as being a direct contravention of His Law of Love. Love rejoices in the possessions and gifts of others, nor would she care to add to her own if it must be at the cost of theirs. Love is an equalizer, levelling up the inequalities the accidents of life have made, and preferring to stand on some lower level with her fellows than to sit solitary on some lofty and cold Olympus. Pride, on the other hand, is a repelling, separating force. Scorning those who occupy the lower places, she is contented only on her Olympian summit, where she keeps herself warm with the fires of her self-adulation. The proud heart is the loveless heart, one huge inflation; if she carries others at all, it is only as a steadying ballast; she will not hesitate to throw them over and throw them down, as mere dust or sand, if their fall will help her to rise. Pride, like the eagle, builds her nest on high, bringing forth whole broods of loveless, preying passions, hatreds, jealousies, and hypocrisies. Pride sees no brotherhood

in man; humanity to her means no more than so many serfs to wait upon her pleasure, or so many victims for her sacrifice! And how Jesus loved to prick these bubbles of airy nothings, showing up these vanities as the very essence of selfishness! He did not spare His words, even though they stung, when "He marked how they chose out the chief seats" at the friendly supper (xiv. 7); and one of His bitter "woes" He hurled at the Pharisees just because "they loved the chief seats in the synagogues," worshipping Self, when they pretended to worship God, so making the house of God itself an arena for the sport and play of their proud ambitions. "He that is least among you all," He said, when rebuking the disciples' lust for pre-eminence, "the same is great." And such is Heaven's law: humility is the cardinal virtue, the "strait" and low gate which opens into the very heart of the kingdom. Humility is the one and the only way of heavenly preferments and eternal promotions; for in the life to come there will be strange contrasts and inversions, as he that exalted himself is now humbled, and he that humbled himself is now exalted (xiv. 11).

Tracing now the lines of duty as they run across the outer life, we find them following the same directions. As the golden milestone of the Forum marked the centre of the empire, towards which its roads converged, and from which all distances were measured, so in the Christian commonwealth Jesus makes Love the capital, the central, controlling power; while at the focal point of all the duties He sets up His Golden Rule, which gives direction to all the paths of human conduct: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (vi. 31). In this general law we have what we might call the ethical compass, for it

embraces within its circle the "whole duty of man" towards his fellow; and it only needs an adjusted conscience, like the delicately poised needle, and the line of the "ought" can be read off at once, even in those uncertain latitudes where no specific law is found. Are we in doubt as to what course of conduct to pursue, as to the kind of treatment we should accord to our fellow? we can always find the *via recta* by a short mental transposition. We have only to put ourselves in his place, and to imagine our relative positions reversed, and from the "would" of our supposed desires and hopes we read the "ought" of present duty. The Golden Rule is thus a practical exposition of the Second Commandment, investing our neighbour with the same luminous atmosphere we throw about ourselves, the atmosphere of a benevolent, beneficent love.

But beyond this general law Jesus gives us a prescript as to the treatment of enemies. He says, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you. To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other: and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also" (vi. 27-29). In considering these injunctions we must bear in mind that the word "enemy" in its New Testament meaning had not the wide and general signification it has to-day. It then stood in antithesis to the word "neighbour," as in Matt. v. 43; and as the word "neighbour" to the Jew included those, and those only, who were of the Hebrew race and faith, the word "enemy" referred to those outside, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. To the Hebrew mind it stood as a synonym for "Gentile." In these words, then, we find, not a general and universal law,

but the special instructions as to their course of conduct in dealing with the Gentiles, to whom they would shortly be sent. No matter what their treatment, they must bear it with an uncomplaining patience. Stripped, beaten, they must not resist, much less retaliate; they must not allow any vindictive feelings to possess them, nor must they take in their own hot hand the sword of a "sweet revenge." Nay, they must even bear a good-will towards their enemies, repaying their hate with love, their spite and enmity with prayers, and their curses with sincerest benedictions.

It will be observed that no mention is made of repentance or of restitution: without waiting for these, or even expecting them, they must be prepared to forgive and prepared to love their enemies, even while they are shamefully treating them. And what else, under the circumstances, could they have done? If they appealed to the secular power it would simply have been an appeal to a heathen court, from enemies to enemies. And as to waiting for repentance, their "enemies" are only treating them as enemies, aliens and foreigners, wronging them, it is true, but ignorantly, and not through any personal malice. They must forgive just for the same reason that Jesus forgave His Roman murderers, "for they know not what they do."

We cannot, therefore, take these injunctions, which evidently had a special and temporary application, as the literal rule of conduct towards those who are unfriendly or hostile to us. This, however, is plain, that even our enemies, whose enmity is directly personal rather than sectional or racial, are not to be excluded from the Law of Love. We must bear them neither hatred nor resentment; we must guard our hearts sacredly from all malevolent, vindictive feelings. We

must not be our own avenger, taking vengeance upon our adversaries, as we let loose the barking Cerberus to track and run them down. All such feelings are contrary to the Law of Love, and so are contraband, entirely foreign to the heart that calls itself Christian. But with all this we are not to meet all sorts of injuries and wrongs without protest or resistance. We cannot condone a wrong without being accomplices in the wrong. To defend our property and life is just as much our duty as it was the wisdom and the duty of those to whom Jesus spoke to offer an uncomplaining cheek to the Gentile smiter. Not to do this is to encourage crime, and to put a premium upon evil. Nor is it inconsistent with a true love to seek to punish, by lawful means, the wrong-doer. Justice here is the highest type of mercy, and pains and penalties have a remedial virtue, taming the passions which had grown too wild, or straightening the conscience that had become warped.

And so Jesus, speaking of the "offences," the occasions of stumbling that would come, said, "If thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" (xvii. 3). It is not the patient, silent acquiescence now. No, we must *rebuke* the brother who has sinned against us and wronged us. And if this is vain, we must tell it to the Church, as St. Matthew completes the injunction (xviii. 17); and if the offender will not hear the Church, he must be cast out, ejected from their fellowship, and becoming to their thought as a heathen or a publican. The wrong, though it is a brother who does it, must not be glossed over with the enamel of a euphemism; nor must it be hushed up, veiled by a guilty silence. It must be brought to the light of day, it must be rebuked and punished; nor must it be

forgiven until it is repented of. Let there be, however, a genuine repentance, and there must be on our part the prompt and complete forgiveness of the wrong. We must set it back out of our sight, amongst the forgotten things. And if the wrong be repeated, if the repentance be repeated, the forgiveness must be repeated too, not only for seven times seven offences, but for seventy times seven. Nor is it left to our option whether we forgive or no; it is a duty, absolute and imperative; we must forgive, as we ourselves hope to be forgiven.

Again, Jesus treats of the true use of wealth. He Himself assumed a voluntary poverty. Silver and gold had He none; indeed, the only coin that we read He handled was the borrowed Roman penny, with Cæsar's inscription upon it. But while Jesus Himself preferred poverty, choosing to live on the outflowing charities of those who felt it both a privilege and an honour to minister to Him of their substance, yet He did not condemn wealth. It was not a wrong *per se*. In the Old Testament it had been regarded as a sign of Heaven's special favour, and amongst the rich Jesus Himself found some of His warmest, truest friends—friends who came nobly to the front when some who had made louder professions had ignominiously fled. Nor did Jesus require the renunciation of wealth as the condition of discipleship. He did not advocate that fictitious *égalité* of the Commune. He sought rather to level up than to level down. It is true He did say to the ruler, "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor;" but this was an exceptional case,[1] and probably it was put before him as a test command, like

[1] This demand was made from the Apostles (xii. 33), but not from others beyond the Apostolic circle.

the command to Abraham that he should sacrifice his son—which was not intended to be carried out literally, but only as far as the intention, the will. There was no such demand made from Nicodemus, and when Zacchæus testified that it had been his practice (the present tense would indicate a retrospective rather than a prospective rule) to give one-half of his income to the poor, Jesus does not find fault with his division, and demand the other half; He commends him, and passes him up, right over the excommunication of the rabbis, among the true sons of Abraham. Jesus did not pose as an assessor; He left men to divide their own inheritance. It was enough for Him if He could put within the soul this new force, the "moral dynamic" of love to God and man; then the outward relations would shape themselves, regulated as by some automatic action.

But with all this, Jesus recognized the peculiar temptations and dangers of wealth. He saw how riches tend to engross and monopolize the thought, diverting it from higher things, and so He classed riches with cares, pleasures, which choke the Word of life, and make it unfruitful. He saw how wealth tended to selfishness; that it acted as an astringent, closing up the valves of the heart, and thus shutting down the outflow of its sympathies. And so Jesus, whenever He spoke of wealth, spoke in words of warning: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" He said, when He saw how the rich ruler set wealth before faith and hope. And singularly enough, the only times Jesus, in His parables, lifts up the curtain of doom it is to tell of "certain rich" men—the one, whose soul swung selfishly between his banquets and his barns, and who, alas! had laid up no treasures in

heaven; and the other, who exchanged his purple and fine linen for the folds of enveloping flames, and the sumptuous fare of earth for eternal want, the eternal hunger and thirst of the after-retribution!

What, then, is the true use of wealth? and how may we so hold it that it shall prove a blessing, and not a bane? In the first place, we must hold it in our hand, and not lay it up in the heart. We must possess it; it must not possess us. We may give our thought, moderately, to it, but our affections must not be allowed to centre upon it. We read that the Pharisees "were lovers of money" (xvi. 14), and that argentic passion was the root of all their evils. The love of money, like an opiate, little by little, steals over the whole frame, deadening the sensibility, perverting the judgment, and weakening the will, producing a kind of intoxication, in which the better reason is lost, and the confused speech can only articulate, with Shylock, "My ducats, my ducats!" The true way of holding wealth is to hold it in trust, recognizing God's ownership and our stewardship. Bank it up, give it no outlet, and your wealth becomes a stagnant pool, breeding malaria and burning fevers; but open the channel, give it an outlet, and it will bring life and music to a thousand lower vales, increasing the happiness of others, and increasing your own the more. And so Jesus strikes in with His frequent imperative, "Give"—"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom" (vi. 38). And this is the true use of wealth, its consecration to the needs of humanity. And may we not say that here is its truest pleasure? He who has learned the art of generous giving, who makes his life one large-hearted benevolence, living for others and

not for himself, has acquired an art that is beautiful and Divine, an art that turns the deserts into gardens of the Lord, and that peoples the sky overhead with unseen singing Ariels. Giving and living are heavenly synonyms, and he who giveth most liveth best.

But not from the words of Jesus alone do we read off the lines of our duty. He is in His own Person a Polar Star, to whom all the meridians of our round life turn, and from whom they emanate. His life is thus our law, His example our pattern. Do we wish to learn what are the duties of children to their parents? the thirty silent years of Nazareth speak in answer. They show us how the Boy Jesus is in subjection to His parents, giving to them a perfect obedience, a perfect trust, and a perfect love. They show us the Divine Youth, still shut in within that narrow circle, ministering to that circle, by hard manual toil becoming the stay of that fatherless home. Do we wish to learn our duties to the State? See how Jesus walked in a land across which the Roman eagle had cast its shadow! He did not preach a crusade against the barbarian invaders. He recognized in their presence and power the ordination of God—that they had been sent to chastise a lapsed Israel. And so Jesus spoke no word of denunciation, no fiery word, which might have proved the spark of a revolution. He took Himself away from the multitudes when they would by force make Him King. He spoke in respectful terms of the powers that were; He even justified the payment of tribute to Cæsar, acknowledging his lordship, while at the same time He spoke of the higher tribute to the great Over-Lord, even God. When upon His trial for life or death, before a Roman tribunal, He even stayed to apologize for Pilate's weakness, casting the

heavier sin back on the hierarchy that had bought Him and delivered Him up; while upon the cross, amid its untold agonies, though His lips were glued by a fearful thirst, He opened them to breathe a last prayer for His Roman executioners: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

But was Jesus, then, an alien from His kinsmen according to the flesh? Was patriotism to Him an unknown force? Did He know nothing of love of country, that inspiration which has turned common men into heroes and martyrs, that love which oceans cannot quench, nor distance weaken, which throws an auroral brightness around the most sterile shores, and which makes the emigrant sick with a strange *Heimweh?* Did the Son of man, the ideal Man, know nothing at all of this? He did know it, and know it well. He identified Himself thoroughly with His people; He placed Himself under the law, observing its rites and ceremonies. After the Childhood-exile in Egypt, He scarcely passed out of the sacred bounds; no storms of rough persecution could dislodge the heavenly Dove, or send Him wheeling off from His native hills. And if He did not preach rebellion, He did preach that righteousness which gives to a nation its truest wealth and widest liberty. He did denounce the Pharisaic shams, the hollow hypocrisies, which had eaten away the nation's heart and strength. And how He loved Jerusalem, forgetting His own triumph in the vision of her humiliation, and weeping for the desolations which were coming sure and fast! This, the Holy City, was the centre to which He ever returned, and to which He gave His last bequest—His cross and His grave. Nay, when the cross is taken down, and the grave is vacant, He lingers to give His

Apostles their commission; and when He bids them, "Go ye out into all the world," He adds, "beginning at Jerusalem." The Son of man is the Son of David still, and within His deep love for humanity at large was a peculiar love for His "own," as the ark itself was enshrined within the Holy of holies.

And so we might traverse the whole ethical domain, and we should find no duty which is not enforced or suggested by the words or the life of the great Teacher. As Dr. Dorner says, "There is only one morality; the original of it is in God; the copy of it is in the Man of God." Happy is He who sees this Polar Star, whose light shines clear and calm above the rush of human years and the ebbs and flows of human life! Happier still is he who shapes his course by it, who reads off all his bearings from its light! He who builds his life after the Divine model, reading the Christ-life into his own, will build up another city of God on earth, four-square and compact together, a city of peace, because a city of righteousness and a city of love.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ESCHATOLOGY OF THE GOSPEL.

COIFI, in his parable to the thanes and nobles of the North Humber country, likened the present life of man to the flight of a sparrow through one of their lighted halls, coming out of the night, and then disappearing in the dark winter whence it came; and he asked for Christianity a candid hearing, if perhaps she might tell the secrets of the beyond. And so indeed she does, lighting up the "dark winter" with a bright, though a partial apocalypse. It is not our purpose to enter into a general discussion of the subject; our task is simply to arrest the beams of inspired light hiding within this Gospel, and by a sort of spectrum analysis to read from them what they are permitted to reveal. And—

1. The Gospel teaches that the grave is not the end of life. It may seem as if we were stating but a truism in saying this; yet if a truism, it perhaps has not been allowed its due place in our thought, and its restatement may not be altogether a superfluous word. We cannot study the life of Jesus without noticing that His views of earth were not the views of men in general. To them this world was everything; to possess it, even in some infinitesimal quantity, was their supreme ambition; and though in their better, clearer

moments they caught glimpses of worlds other than their own, yet to their distant vision they were as the twinkling stars of the azure, far off and cold, soon losing themselves in the haze of unreality, or setting in the shadows of the imposing earth. To Jesus earth was but a fragment of a vaster whole, a fragment whose substances were but the shadows of higher, heavenlier realities. Nor were these outlying spaces to His mind voids of silence, a "dark inane," without life or thought; they were peopled with intelligences whose personalities were as distinctly marked as is this human *Ego*, and whose movements, unweighted by the gyves of flesh, seemed subtle and swift as thought itself. With one of these worlds Jesus was perfectly familiar. With heaven, which was the abode of His Father and innumerable hosts of angels, He was in close and constant correspondence, and the frequent prayer, the frequent upward looks tell us how near and how intensely real the heavenly places were to Him. But in the mind of Jesus this empyrean of happiness and light had its antipodes of woe and darkness, a penal realm of fearful shadow, and which, borrowing the language of the city, He called the Gehenna of burning. Such were the two invisible realms, lying away from earth, yet closely touching it from opposite directions, and to one or other of which all the paths of human life turned, to find their goal and their self-chosen destiny.

And not only so, but the transition from the Seen to the Unseen was not to Jesus the abrupt and total change that it seems to man. To us the dividing-line is both dark and broad. It seems to us a transmigration to some new and strange world, where we must begin life *de novo*. To Jesus the line was narrow, like one of

the imaginary meridians of earth, the "here" shading off into the "hereafter," while both were but the hemispheres of one round life. And so Jesus did not often speak of "death;" that was too human a word. He preferred the softer names of "sleep" or "exodus," thus making death the quickener of life, or likening it to a triumphal march from bondage to liberty. Nor was "the Valley of the Shadow" to Jesus a strange, unfamiliar place. He knew all its secrets, all its windings. It was His own territory, where His will was supreme. Again and again He throws a commanding voice across the valley, a voice which goes reverberating among the heights beyond, and instantly the departed spirit retraces its steps, to animate again the cold clay it had forsaken. "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living," said Jesus, as He claimed for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob an existence altogether apart from the crumbling dust of Hebron; and as we see Moses and Elias coming to the Mount of Transfiguration, we see that the departed have not so far departed as to take no interest in earthly things, and as not to hear the strike of earthly hours. And how clearly this is seen in the resurrection life of Jesus, with which this Gospel closes! Death and the Grave have done their worst to Him, but how little is that worst! how insignificant the blank it makes in the Divine Life! The few hours in the grave were but a semibreve rest in the music of that Life; the Easter morning struck a fresh bar, and the music went on, in the higher spaces, it is true, but in the same key and in the same sweet strain. And just so is it with all human life; "the grave is not our goal." Conditions and circumstances will of necessity change, as the mortal puts on immortality, but the life itself will be one and the same

life, here amid things visible and temporal, and there amid the invisible and eternal.

2. The Gospel shows in what respects the conditions of the after-life will be changed. In chapter xx. 27 we read how that the Sadducees came to Jesus, tempting Him. They were the cold materialists of the age, denying the existence of spirits, and so denying the resurrection. They put before Him an extreme, though not impossible case, of a woman who had been the wife, successively, of seven brethren; and they ask, with the ripple of an inward laugh in their question, "In the resurrection therefore whose wife of them shall she be?" Jesus answered, "The sons of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they that are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: for neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." It will be observed how Jesus plays with the word around which the Sadducean mind revolves. To them marriage was a key-word which locked up the gates of an after-life, and threw back the resurrection among the impossibilities and absurdities. But Jesus takes up their key-word, and turning it round and round in His speech, He makes it unlock and open the inner soul of these men, showing how, in spite of their intellectuality, the drift of their thoughts was but low and sensual. At the same time Jesus shows that their test-word is altogether mundane. It is made for earth alone; for having a nature of flesh and blood, it cannot enter into the higher kingdom of glory. Marriage has its place in the life whose termini are birth and death. It exists mainly for the perpetuation and increase of the human race. It has thus to

do with the lower nature of man, the physical, the earthly; but in the world to come birth, marriage, death will be outdated, obsolete terms. Man then will be "equal unto the angels," the coarser nature which fitted him for earth being shaken off and left behind, amongst other mortalities.

And exactly the same truth is taught by the three posthumous appearances recorded in this Gospel. When they appeared upon the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elias had been residents of the other world, the one for nine, the other for fourteen centuries. But while possessing the form, and perhaps the features of the old body of earth, the glorious body they wear now is under conditions and laws altogether different. How easy and aërial are its movements! Though it possesses no wings, it has the lightness and buoyancy of a bird, moving through space swiftly and silently as the light pulses through the ether. Or take the body of Christ's resurrection life. It has not yet become the glorified body of the heavenly life; it is in its transition state, between the two; yet how changed it is! Lifted above the needs and laws of our earth-bound nature, the risen Christ no longer lives among His own; He dwells apart, where we cannot tell. When He does appear He comes in upon them suddenly, giving no warning of His approach; and then, after the bright though brief apocalypse, He vanishes as mysteriously as He came, passing at the last on the clouds to heaven. There is thus some correspondence between the body of the old and that of the new life, though how far the resemblance extends we cannot tell; we can only fall back upon the Apostle's words, which to our human ear sound like a paradox, but which give us our only solution of the enigma, "It is raised a spiritual body"

(1 Cor. xv. 44). It is no longer the "natural body," but a supernatural one, with a spiritual instead of a material form, and under spiritual laws.

But taking the Apostle's words as our base-line, and measuring from them, we may throw our lines of sight across the hereafter, reading at least as much as this, that whatever may be the pleasures or the pains of the after-life, they will be of a spiritual, and not of a physical kind. It is just here that our vision sometimes gets blurred and indistinct, as all the descriptions of that after-life, even in Scripture, are given in earthly figures. And so we have built up before us a material heaven, with jasper walls, and gates of pearl, and gardens of perennial fruits, with crowns and other palace delights. But it is evident that these are but the earthly shadows of the heavenly realities, the darkened glasses of our earthly speech, which help our dull vision to gaze upon glories which the eye of our mortality hath not seen, and which its heart cannot conceive, except dimly, as a few "broken lights" pass through the dark lenses of these earthly figures. What new senses may be created we do not know, but if the body of the after-life is "a spiritual body," then its whole environment must be changed. Material substances can no longer affect it, either to cause pleasure or pain; and though we may not yet tell in what the delights of the one state, or the pains of the other will consist, we do know that they must be something other than literal palms and crowns, and other than material fires. These figures are but the stammerings of our earthly speech, as it tries to tell the unutterable.

3. Our Gospel teaches that character determines destiny. "A man's life," said Jesus, when rebuking covetousness (xii. 15), "consistetn not in the abundance of

the things which he possesseth." These are not life's noblest aim, nor its truest wealth. They are but the accidents of life, the particles of floating dust, caught up by the stream; they will be left behind soon as the sediment, if not before, when they reach the barrier of the grave. A man's possessions do not constitute the true life, they do not make the real self, the man. Here it is not what a man has, but what a man is. And a man *is* just what his heart makes him. The outer life is but the blossoming of the inner soul, and what we call character, in its objective meaning, is but the subtle and silent influence, the odour, as we might call it, fragrant or otherwise, which the soul unconsciously throws out. And even in this world character is more than circumstance, for it gives aim and direction to the whole life. Men do not always reach their goal in earthly things, but in the moral world each man goes to his "own place," the place he himself has chosen and sought; he is the arbiter of his own destiny.

And what we find to be a law of earth is the law of the kingdom of heaven, as Jesus was constantly affirming. The future life would simply be the present life, with eternity as its coefficient. Destiny itself would be but the harvest of earthly deeds, the hereafter being only the after-here. Jesus shows us how while on earth we may lay up "treasures in the heavens," making for ourselves "purses which wax not old," and thus becoming "rich toward God." He draws a vivid picture of "a certain rich man," whose one estimate of life was "the abundance of the things which he possessed," the size and affluence of his barns, and whose soul was required of him just when he was congratulating it on the years of guaranteed plenty, bidding it,

"Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry (xii. 16-12)." He does not here trace for us the destiny of such a soul —He does this in another parable—but He pictures it as suddenly torn away, and eternally separated, from all it had possessed before, leaving it, perhaps, to be squandered thriftlessly, or consumed by the fires of lust; while, starved and shrivelled, the pauper soul is driven out from its earthly stewardship, to find, alas! no welcome in the "eternal tabernacles." In the appraisement of this world such a man would be deemed wise and happy, but to Heaven he is the "foolish one," committing the great, the eternal folly.

The same lesson is taught in the parables of the Housebuilders (vi. 47) and of the Talents (xix. 12). In each there comes the inevitable test, the down-rush of the flood and the reckoning of the lord, a test which leaves the obedient secure and happy, the faithful promoted to honour and rewards, passed up among the kings; but the disobedient, if not entombed in the ruins of their false hopes, yet all shelterless from the pitiless storm, and the unfaithful and slothful servant stripped of even the little he had, passed downwards into dishonour and shame.

In another parable, that of the Rich Man and Lazarus (xvi. 19-31), we have a light thrown upon our subject which is at once vivid and lurid. In a few graphic words He draws for us the picture of strange contrasts. The one is rich, dwelling in a palatial residence, whose imposing gateway looked down upon the vulgar crowd; clothed in garments of Tyrian purple and of Egyptian byssus, which only great wealth could purchase, and faring sumptuously every day. So, with perpetual banquets, the rich man lived his selfish, sensual life. With thought all centred upon himself, and that his lowest

self, he has no thoughts or sympathies to spare for the outlying world. They do not even travel so far as to the poor beggar who is cast daily at his gate, in hopes that some of the shaken-out crumbs of the banquet may fall within his reach. Such is the contrast—the extreme of wealth, and the extreme of poverty; the one with troops of friends, the other friendless—for the verb shows that the hands which laid him down by the rich man's gate were not the gentle hands of affection, but the rough hands of duty or of a cold charity; the one clothed in splendid attire, the other not possessing enough even to cover his sores; the one gorged to repletion, the other shrunken and starved; the one the anonymous Epicurean, the other possessing a name indeed, but nought beside, but a name that had a Divinity hidden within it,* and which was an index to the soul that bore it. Such were the two characters Jesus portrayed; and then, lifting up the veil of shadows, He shows how the marked contrast reappears in the after-life, but with a strange inverting. Now the poor man is blessed, the rich in distress; the one is enfolded in Abraham's bosom, the other enveloped in flames; the one has all the delights of Paradise, the other begs for just a drop of water with which to cool the parched tongue.

It may be said that this is simply parable, set forth in language which must not be taken literally. So it is; but the parables of Jesus were not mere word-pictures; they held in solution essential truth. And when we have eliminated all this figurative colouring there is still left this residuary, elementary truth, that character determines destiny: that we cast into our

* The name "Lazarus" is derived from El-ezer, or "God helps."

future the shadow of our present selves; that the good will be blessed, and the evil unblessed, which means accursed; and that heaven and hell are tremendous realities, whose pleasures and whose pains lie alike deep beyond the sounding of our weak speech. When the rich man forgot his duties to humanity; when he banished God from his mansion, and proscribed mercy from his thoughts; when he left Heaven's foundling to the dogs, he was writing out his book of doom, passing sentence upon himself. The tree lies as it falls, and it falls as it leans; and where is there place for the unforgiven, the unregenerate, for the sensual and the selfish, the unjust and the unclean, but somewhere in the outer darkness they themselves have helped to make? To the sensual and the vile heaven itself would be a hell, its very joys curdling into pain, its streets, thronged with the multitudes of the redeemed, offering to the guilty and unrenewed soul but a solitude of silence and anguish; and even were there no final judgment, no solemn pronouncement of destiny, the evil could never blend with the good, the pure with the vile; they would gravitate, even as they do now, in opposite directions, each seeking its "own place." Wherever and whatever our final heaven may be, no one is an outcast but who casts himself out, a self-immolation, a suicide.

But is it destiny? it may be asked. May there not be an after-probation, so that character itself may be transformed? may not the "great gulf" itself disappear, or at last be bridged over, so that the repentant may pass out of its penal but purifying fires? Such, indeed, is the belief, or rather the hope, of some; but "the larger hope" as they are pleased to call it, as far as this Gospel is concerned, is a beautiful but illusive

dream. He who was Himself the "Resurrection and the Life," and who holds in His own hands the keys of death and of Hades, gives no hint of such a post-humous palingenesis. He speaks again and again of a day of test and scrutiny, when actions will be weighed and characters assayed, and when men will be judged according to their works. Now it is at the "coming" of the Son of man, in the glory of His Father, and with a retinue of "holy angels;" now it is the return-ing of the lord, and the reckoning with his servants; while again it is at the end of the world, as the angel-reapers separate the wheat from the tares; or as He Himself, the great Judge, with His "Come ye," passes on the faithful to the heavenly kingdom, and at the same time, with His "Depart ye," drives from His presence the unfaithful and unforgiven into the outer darkness. Nor does Jesus say one word to suggest that the judgment is not final. The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, whatever that may mean, shall not be forgiven (xii. 10), or, as St. Matthew expresses it, "neither in this world, nor in that which is to come." The unfaithful servant is "cut asunder" (xii. 46); the enemies who would not have their Lord to reign over them are slain (xix. 27); and when once the door is shut it is all in vain that those outside cry, "Lord, open to us!" They had an open door, but they slighted and scorned it, and now they must abide by their choice, outside the door, outside the kingdom, with the "workers of iniquity," where "there is weep-ing and gnashing of teeth" (xiii. 28).

Or if we turn again to the parable of the Rich Man, where is there room for "the larger hope"? where is the suggestion that these "pains of hell" may be lessened, and ultimately escaped altogether? We listen

in vain for one syllable of hope. In vain he makes his appeal to "father Abraham;" in vain he entreats the good offices of Lazarus; in vain he asks for a momentary alleviation of his pain, in the boon of one drop of water: between him and help, yea, between him and hope, is a "great gulf fixed, . . . that none may cross" (xvi. 26).

"That none may cross." Such are the words of Jesus, though here put in the mouth of Abraham; and if finality is not here, where can we find it? What may be the judgment passed upon those who, though erring, are ignorant, we cannot tell, though Jesus plainly indicates that the number of the stripes will vary, as they knew, or they did not know, the Lord's will; but for those who had the light, and turned from it, who saw the right, but did it not, who heard the Gospel of love, with its great salvation, and only rejected it—for these there is only an "outer darkness" of eternal hopelessness. And what is the outer darkness itself but the darkness of their own inner blindness, a blindness which was wilful and persistent?

Our Gospel thus teaches that death does not alter character, that character makes destiny, and that destiny once determined is unalterable and eternal. Or, to put it in the words of the angel to the seer, "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still" (Rev xxii. 11).

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WATCH IN GETHSEMANE.

HITHERTO the life of Jesus has been comparatively free from sorrow and from pain. With the exception of the narrow strip of wilderness which fell between the Baptism and His inaugural miracle, the Divine Life has lain for the most part in the sunshine, above the fret and fever of anxious thought and care. True, He had enemies, whose hatred was persistent and virulent; the shafts of calumny fell around Him in one steady rain; His motives were constantly misconstrued, His words misunderstood; but with all this His life was peace. How could He have spoken of "rest" of soul, and have promised it to the weary and heavy-laden, if He Himself were a stranger to its experience? How could He have awoke such songs and shouts of gladness, or have strewn the lives of men with such unusual brightness, without having that brightness and music coming back in reflections and echoes within His own heart—that heart which was the fontal source of their new-found joys? And if many doubted, or even hated Him, there were many who admired and feared, and not a few who loved and adored Him, and who were glad to place at His disposal their entire substance, nay, their entire selves. But if His anointing thus far has been the anointing of gladness, there is a baptism of sorrow and

anguish prepared for Him, and to that ordeal He now proceeds, first girding up His soul with the music of a thanksgiving psalm. Let us, too, arise and follow Him; but taking off our shoes, let us step softly and reverently into the mystery of the Divine sorrow; for though we must ever stand back from that mystery more than a "stone's cast," perhaps, if we keep mind and heart awake and alert, we may read something of its deep meaning.

The whole scene of Gethsemane is unique. Like the Mount of Transfiguration, the Garden of the Agony stands "apart" from all other paths, in a profound isolation. And in more senses than this these two august scenes are related and coincident. Indeed, we cannot fully understand the mystery of the Garden but as we allow the mystery of the Mount to explain it, in part at least, so threading the light of the one into the darkness of the other. On the Mount of Transfiguration the Divine Life, as we have seen, reached its culminating point, its perihelion as we may call it, where it touched the very heavens for one brief night, passing through its out-streaming glories and crossing the paths of celestials. In Gethsemane we have the antipodal fact; we see the Divine Life in its far aphelion, where it touches hell itself, moving round in an awful gloom, and crossing the paths of the "powers of darkness." And so our best outlook into Gethsemane is not from the Mount of Olives—though the two names are related, as the two places are adjacent, Gethsemane lying at the foot of Olivet—but from that more distant Mount of Transfiguration.

Leaving the "guest-chamber," where a Passover of a new order has been instituted, and the cup, with its fruit of the vine, has received a higher consecration,

Jesus leads the broken band down the stairs, which still vibrate with the heavy tread of the traitor, and in the still, full moonlight they pass out of the city, the gates being open because of the Passover. Descending the steep ravine, and crossing the brook Kedron, they enter the enclosure of Gethsemane. Both St. Luke and St. John tell us that He was accustomed to resort thither—for, strangely enough, we do not read of Jesus spending so much as one night within the city walls—and so probably the garden belonged to one of His adherents, possibly to St. Mark. Bidding the eight remain near the entrance, and exhorting them to pray that they enter not into, or, as it means here, that they "yield not to," the temptation which is shortly to come upon them, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John farther into the garden. They were witnesses of His Transfiguration, when His face shone like the sun, and the spirits of the perfected came to do Him homage; they must now see a transfiguration of sorrow, as that face is furrowed by the sharp lines of pain, and half-masked by a veil of blood. From the narratives of St. Matthew and St. Mark it would appear as if Jesus now experienced a sudden change of feeling. In the guest-chamber He was calmly confident; and though we may detect in His words and symbolic acts a certain undertone of sadness, the salutation of one "about to die," yet there was no tremor, no fear. He spoke of His own death, which now was near at hand, as calmly as if the Mount of Sacrifice were but another mountain of spices; while to His disciples He spoke words of cheer and hope, putting around their hearts a soothing, healing balm, even before the dreadful wound is made. But now all this is changed: "He began to be greatly amazed and

sore troubled" (St. Mark xiv. 33). The word we here render "amazed," as St. Mark uses it, has sometimes the element of fear within it, as when the women were "amazed," or "affrighted," by the vision of the angels (xvi. 5); and such, we are inclined to think, is its meaning here. It was not so much wonder as it was trepidation, and a certain dread, which now fell of a sudden upon the Master. Over that pure soul, which ever lay calm and serene as the bright heaven which stooped to embrace it, has broken a storm of conflicting winds, and dense, murky clouds, and all is disquiet and distress, where before was nothing but peace. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" such is the strange confession of tremulous lips, as for once He opens the infinite depths of His heart, and shows the mortal grief which has suddenly fallen there. It is the first contact of the eclipse, as between Himself and the Father's smile another world is passing, the world of the "outer darkness," even hell, throwing down upon His soul a chilling, awful shadow.

Jesus understands its meaning. It is the signal for the final battle, the shadow of "the prince of this world," who, rallying all his forces, cometh to find "nothing in Me." Jesus accepts the challenge, and that He may meet the enemy single-handed, with no earthly supports, He bids the three, "Abide ye here, and watch with Me." "With Me," and not "for Me;" for what could avail to Him the vigilance of human eyes amid this felt darkness of the soul? It was not for Himself He bade them "watch," but for themselves, that waking and praying they might gain a strength which would be proof against temptation, the test which would be keenly severe, and which now was close at hand.

"And He was parted from them about a stone's cast." The verb implies a measure of constraint, as if, in the conflict of emotion, the longing for some human presence and human sympathy held Him back. And why not? Is not the very presence of a friend a solace in grief, even if no words are spoken? and does not the "aloneness" of a sorrow make the sorrow tenfold more bitter? Not like the "stricken deer that left the herd," the human heart, when wounded or sore pressed, yearns for sympathy, finding in the silent look or in the touch of a hand a grateful anodyne. But this wine-press He must tread alone, and of the people there must be none with Him; and so the three who are most favoured and most beloved are left back at a stone's cast from the physical suffering of Christ, while from His heart-agony they must stand back at an infinite distance.

It was while Jesus was praying upon the holy mount that the heavens were opened unto Him; and now, as another cloud envelopes Him, not of glory, but of a thick darkness, it finds Him in the same attitude of prayer. He at whose feet sinful man had knelt, all unrebuked, Himself now kneels, as He sends to heaven the earnest and almost bitter cry, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me!" The three Evangelists differ in their wording of the Saviour's petition, showing that the spirit is more than the letter of prayer; that Heaven thinks more of the inner thought than of the outward drapery of words; but the thought of the three is identical, while all make prominent the central figure of the "cup."

The cups of Scripture are of divers patterns and of varied meanings. There was the cup of blessing, like that of the Psalmist (Psalm xxiii. 5), filled to the brim

and running over with mercy. There was "the cup of salvation, "that sacrament of the Old Testament which kept in memory one deliverance, that of Israel, while it prophesied of another, the " great salvation " which was to come. What, then, was the cup Jesus so feared to drink, and which He asked, so earnestly and repeatedly, that it might pass from Him? Was it the fear of death? Certainly not; for how could He be afraid of death, who had so triumphed over it, and who had proclaimed Himself the Resurrection and the Life? How could He fear death, when He knew so well " the seraph face that smiled beneath the frowning mask," and knew that it would end for ever all His sufferings and His pain? Death to Him was a familiar thought. He spoke of it freely, not either with the hard indifference of the Stoic, or with the palsied speech of one whose lips shake with an inward fear, but in calm, sweet accents, as any child of earth might speak of going home. Was this " cup," then, the death itself? and when He asked that it might pass away, was He suggesting that possibly some mode of atonement might be found other than the cross? We think not. Jesus knew full well that His earthly life would have, and could have, but one issue. Death would be its goal, as it was its object. Whether, as Holman Hunt represents, the cross threw its shadow back as far as the shop at Nazareth, we do not know, for the record is silent. But we do know that the shadow of death lay across the whole of His public life, for we find it appearing in His words. The cross was a dark and vivid certainty that He wished neither to forget nor to evade, for must not the Son of man be "lifted up," that He may draw all men to Himself? Must not the corn of wheat be hidden in its grave before it can

become fruitful, throwing itself forward down the years in hundredfold multiplications? Yes; death to Jesus is the inevitable, and long before the Roman soldiers have pieced together the transverse beams Jesus had made His cross, fashioning it in His thought, and hiding it in His words. Nay, He has this very night instituted a new sacrament, in which, for all generations, the broken bread shall be the emblem of His bruised and broken body, and the wine, of His blood, the blood of the New Testament, which is shed for man. And does Jesus now seek, by reiterated prayers, to shift that cross from the Divine purpose, substituting in its place something less painful, less cruel? does He seek now to annul His own predictions, and to make His own sacrament void and meaningless? This cannot be; and so, whatever the "cup" may mean, we cannot take it as a synonym for His death.

What, then, is its meaning? The Psalmist had long before sung—

> "For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine foameth;
> It is full of mixture, and He poureth out of the same:
> Surely the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them" (Psalm lxxv. 8);

while St. John, speaking of the last woes (Rev. xiv. 10), tells how they who have the mark of the beast upon their foreheads "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of His anger." Here, then, is the "cup" which now is set before the Son of man, the very touch of which fills His soul with unutterable dread. It is the cup of God's anger, filled to the brim with its strange red wine, the wine of His wrath. Jesus comes to earth as the Re-

presentative Man, the Second Adam, in whom all shall be made alive. He voluntarily assumes the place of the transgressor, as St. Paul writes (2 Cor. v. 21), "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him," a passage which corresponds exactly with the prophetic idea of substitution, as given by Isaiah (liii. 5), "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." And so "the iniquity of us all" was laid on Him, the Holy One. In His own Person He must feel, in its concentrated forms, the smart and consequence of sin; and as His physical sufferings are the extremest pain even sin can produce, so Jesus must suffer, too, all the mental anguish, the agony of a soul bereft of God. And as Jesus, on the Transfiguration Mount, passed up to the very gate of heaven, so lighting up with splendour and glory the lost path of unfallen man, so now, in the Garden, Jesus tracks the path of fallen man, right on to its fearful consummation, which is the "outer darkness" of hell itself. This vivid consciousness has been graciously withheld from Him hitherto; for the terrible pressure would simply have unfitted Him for His ministry of blessing; for how could He have been the "kindly Light," leading humanity homeward, heavenward, if that Light Himself were hidden in "encircling gloom," and lost in a felt darkness? But ere His mission is complete this is an experience that He must know. Identifying Himself with sin, He must feel its very farthest consequence, the awful solitude, and the unutterable anguish, of a soul now bereft of hope and forsaken of God. In the heathen fable Orpheus goes down, lyre in hand, to the Plutonic realm, to bring

back again to life and love the lost Eurydice; but Jesus, in His vicarious sufferings, goes down to hell itself, that He may win back from their sins, and bear in triumph to the upper heavens, a lost humanity.

Rising from the ground, and going back to His three disciples, He finds them asleep. The Synoptists all seek to explain, and to apologize for, their unnatural slumber, St. Matthew and St. Mark telling us that their "eyes were heavy," while St. Luke states that their sleep was the result of their grief; for, happily, in the wonderful compensations of nature, intense grief does tend to induce somnolence. But while the Evangelists refer their slumber to natural causes, might there not be something more in it, some supernatural element? Sleep can be caused by natural means, and yet be an unnatural sleep, as when narcotics benumb the senses, or some mesmeric spell muffles the speech, and makes the soul for a time unconscious. And might it not have been some invisible touch which made their eyes so heavy? for it is an exact repetition of their attitude when on the holy mount, and in that sleep sorrow certainly had no part. When St. John saw the vision upon Patmos, he "fell at His feet as one dead;" and when Saul beheld the light, near Damascus, he fell to the ground. And how often we find the celestial vision connected with a trance-like state! and why may not the "trance" be an effect of the vision, just as well as its cause, or rather its circumstance? At any rate, the fact is plain, that supernatural visions tend to lock up the natural senses, the veil which is uplifted before the unseen world being wrapped around the eyes and the soul of the seer. And this, we are inclined to think, was a possible, partial cause for the slumber upon the mount and in the garden, a sleep which, under

the circumstances, was strangely unnatural and almost unpardonable.

Addressing Himself directly to Peter, who had promised to follow His Lord unto death, but whose heart now strangely lagged behind, and calling him by his earlier name—for Jesus only once made use of the name He Himself had chosen; the "Rock" was at present in a state of flux, and had not yet settled down to its petrine character—He said, "What, Simon, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Then, for a moment forgetting His own sorrow, and putting Himself in their place, He makes the apology for them which their lips are afraid to utter: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak;" so compassionate is He over human weakness and infirmity, even while He is severity itself towards falsity and sin.

St. Luke records the narrative only in a condensed form, giving us the salient points, but not entering so fully into detail. It is from St. Matthew and St. Mark that we learn how Jesus went back a second time, and falling prostrate on the ground, prayed still in the self-same words, and how He returned to His disciples to find them again asleep; even the reproof of the Master has not been able to counterbalance the pressure of the supernatural heaviness. No word is spoken this time—at any rate the Evangelists have not repeated them for us—but how eloquent would be that look of disappointment and of grief! and how that rebuke would fall burning hot upon their heart, focussed in the lenses of His sad and tearful eyes! But the three are dazed, bewildered, and for once the ready tongue of Peter is speechless; "they wist not what to answer Him" (Mark xiv. 40).

Not yet, however, is the conflict ended. Three times did the tempter come to Him in the wilderness, and three times is the fierce battle to be waged in the garden, the last the sorest. It would almost seem as if the three assaults were descending steps of sorrow, each marking some lower deep in the dark mystery; for now the death-sorrow becomes an "agony" of spirit, a pressure from within so fearful as to arrest the flow of blood, forcing it through the opened pores in an awful sweat, until great drops, or "clots," of blood gathered upon His face, and then fell to the ground. Could there be possibly, even for the lost, an anguish more intense? and was not Jesus then, as man's Surety, wringing out and drinking the very last dregs of that cup of His anger which "the wicked of the earth," if unredeemed, had been doomed to drink? Verily He was, and the bloody sweat was a part, an earnest, of our atonement, sprinkling with its redemptive virtues the very ground which was "cursed" for man's sake (Gen. iii. 17). It was the pledge and the foregathered fruit of a death already virtually accomplished, in the absolute surrender of the Divine Son as man's Sacrifice.

And so the thrice-uttered prayer of Jesus, even though He prayed the "more earnestly," was not granted. It was heard, and it was answered, but not in the specific way of the request. Like Paul's prayer for the removal of the thorn, and which, though not granted, was yet answered in the promise of the "sufficient" grace, so now the thrice-uttered prayer of Jesus does not remove the cup. It is there, and it is there for Him to drink, as He tastes for man both of the earthly death and of the bitterness of the after, the second death. But the answer came in the strength-

ening of His soul, and in the heavenly greetings the angel brought down to Him when the conflict was over. But in this reiterated prayer for the removal of the cup there was no conflict between Himself and the Father. The request itself was enveloped in submission, the contingent "if" which preceded it, and the "not My will, but Thine," which followed, completely enclosing it. The will of Jesus was ever adjusted to the will of the Father, working within it in an absolute precision, with no momentary breaks. But here the "if" implies uncertainty, doubt. Even Jesus is not quite sure as to what, in the special case, the Father's will may involve, and so, while He asks for the removal of the cup, this is the smaller request, inlaid within the larger, deeper prayer, that "not My will, but Thine, be done." Jesus did not seek to bend the Father's will, and make it conform to His desires, but He sought, whatever might be the cost, to configure His desires to that all-wise and all-loving Will.

So in our smaller lives there may be hours of distress and uncertainty. We may see, mingled for us, cups of sorrow, loss, or pain, which we fear to drink, and the shrinking flesh may seek to be exempted from the ordeal; but let us not too hastily ask that they may be put away, for fear we may dismiss some cup of blessing from our life. Let us seek rather for a perfect submission to the will of God, conforming all our desires and all our prayers to that will. So in that "perfect acquiescence" there will be for us a "perfect rest." Gethsemane itself will become bright and all musical with songs, and where the powers of darkness mocked us Heaven's angels will come, with their sweet ministry. Nay, the cup of sorrow and of pain, at which we trembled before, if we see how God's will has

wrought and filled it, and we embrace that will, the cup of sorrow will be a transfigured cup, a golden chalice of the King, all filled to the brim, and running over, with the new wine of the kingdom.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PASSION.

Luke xxii. 47—xxiii.

WHILE Jesus kept His sad watch in Gethsemane, treading the winepress alone, His enemies kept theirs in the city. The step of Judas, as he passed out into the night, went verberating within the house of the high priest, and onwards into the palace of Pilate himself, awaking a thousand echoes, as swift messengers flew hither and thither, bearing the hurried summons, calling the rulers and elders from their repose, and marshalling the Roman cohort. Hitherto the powers of darkness have been restrained, and though they have, again and again, attempted the life of Jesus, as if some occult spell were upon them, they could not accomplish their purpose. Far back in the Infancy Herod had sought to kill Him; but though his cold steel reaped a bloody swath in Ramah, it could not touch the Divine Child. The men of Nazareth had sought to hurl Him down the sheer precipice, but He escaped; Jesus had not come into the world to die at Nazareth, thrown off, as by an accident, from a Galilean cliff. He had come to "accomplish His decease," as the celestials put it upon the mount, "at Jerusalem,' and that too, as He indicated plainly and frequently in

His speech, upon a cross. Now, however, the hour of darkness has struck, and the fulness of the time has come. The cross and the Victim both are ready, and Heaven itself consents to the great sacrifice.

Strangely enough, the first overture of the "Passion music" is by one of the twelve—as our Evangelist names him, "Judas who was called Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve" (xxii. 3). It will be observed that St. Luke puts a parenthesis of forty verses between the actual betrayal and its preliminary stages, so throwing the conception of the plot back to an earlier date than the eve of the Last Supper, and the subsequent narrative is best read in the light of its programme. At first sight it would appear as if the part of the betrayer were superfluous, seeing that Jesus came almost daily into the Temple, where He spoke openly, without either reserve or fear. What need could there be for any intermediary to come between the chief priests and the Victim of their hate? Was not His Person familiar to all the Temple officials? and could they not apprehend Him almost at any hour? Yes, but one thing stood in the way, and that was "the fear of the people." Jesus evidently had an influential following; the popular sympathies were on His side; and had the attack been made upon Him during the day, in the thronged streets of the city or in the Temple courts, there would have been, almost to a certainty, a popular rising on His behalf. The arrest must be made "in the absence of the multitude" (xxii. 6), which means that they must fall upon Him in one of His quiet hours, and in one of His quiet retreats; it must be a night attack, when the multitudes are asleep. Here, then, is room for the betrayer, who comes at the opportune moment, and offers himself for the

despicable task, a task which has made the name of "Judas" a synonym for all that is treacherous and vile. How the base thought could ever have come into the mind of Judas it were hard to tell, but it certainly was not sprung upon him as a surprise. But men lean in the direction of their weakness, and when they fall it is generally on their weakest side, the side on which temptation is the strongest. It was so here. St. John writes him down in a single sentence: "He was a thief, and having the bag, took away what was put therein" (John xii. 6). His ruling passion was the love of money, and in the delirium of this fever his hot hands dashed to the ground and broke in pieces the tables of law and equity alike, striking at all the moralities. And between robbing his Master and betraying Him there was no great distance to traverse, especially when conscience lay in a numb stupor, drugged by opiates, these tinctures of silver.

Here, then, is a betrayer ready to their hand. He knows what hour is best, and how to conduct them to His secret retreats. And so Judas "communed" with the chief priests and captains, or he "talked it over with them" as the word means, the secret conference ending in a bargain, as they "covenanted" to give him money (xxii. 5). It was a hard and fast bargain; for the word "covenanted" has about it a metallic ring, and opening it out, it lets us see the wordy chaffering, as Judas abates his price to the offer of the high priests, the thirty pieces of silver, which was the market price of an ordinary slave. Not that Judas intended to be a participator in His death, as the sequel of his remorse shows. He probably thought and hoped that his Master would escape, slipping through the meshes they so cunningly had thrown about Him; but having done

his part of the covenant, his reward would be sure, for the thirty pieces were already in his possession. Ah, he little dreamed how far-reaching his action would be! That silver key of his would set in motion the ponderous wheel which would not stop until his Master was its Victim, lying all crushed and bleeding beneath it! He only discovered his mistake when, alas! it was too late for remedy. Gladly would he have given back his thirty pieces, ay, and thirty times thirty, to have called back his treacherous "Hail," but he could not. That "Hail, Master," had gone beyond his recall, reverberating down the ages and up among the stars, while even its echoes, as they came back to him in painful memories, threw him out of the world an unloved and guilty suicide!

What with the cunning of the high priests and the cold calculations of Judas, whose mind was practised in weighing chances and providing for contingences, the plot is laid deeply and well. No detail is omitted: the band of soldiers, who shall put the stamp of officialism upon the procedure, while at the same time they cower the populace and repress any attempt at rescue; the swords and staves, should they have to resort to force; the lanterns and torches, with which to light up the dark hiding-places of the garden; the cords or chains, with which to bind their Prisoner; the kiss, which should be at once the sign of recognition and the signal for the arrest, all are prearranged and provided; while back of these the high priests are keeping their midnight watch, ready for the mock trial, for which the suborned witnesses are even now rehearsing their parts. Could worldly prudence or malicious skill go farther?

Stealthily as the leopard approaches its victim, the

motley crowd enter the garden, coming with muffled steps to take and lead away the Lamb of God. Only the glimmer of their torches gave notice of their approach, and even these burned dull in the intense moonlight. But Jesus needed no audible or visible warning, for He Himself knew just how events were drifting, reading the near future as plainly as the near past; and before they have come in sight He has awoke the three sleeping sentinels with a word which will effectually drive slumber from their eyelids: "Arise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that betrayeth Me" (Matt. xxvi. 46).

It will be seen from this that Jesus could easily have eluded His pursuers had He cared to do so. Even without any appeal to His supernatural powers, He could have withdrawn Himself under cover of the night, and have left the human sleuth-hounds foiled of their prey and vainly baying at the moon. But instead of this, He makes no attempt at flight. He even seeks the glades of Gethsemane, when by simply going elsewhere He might have disconcerted their plot and brought their counsel to nought. And now He yields Himself up to His death, not passively merely, but with the entire and active concurrence of His will. He "offered Himself," as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews expresses it (Heb. ix. 14), a free-will Offering, a voluntary Sacrifice. He could, as He Himself said, have called legions of angels to His help; but He would not give the signal, though it were no more than one uplifted look. And so He does not refuse even the kiss of treachery; He suffers the hot lips of the traitor to burn His cheeks; and when others would have shaken off the viper into the fire, or have crushed it with the heel of a righteous indignation, Jesus receives

patiently the stamp of infamy, His only word being a question of surprise, not at the treachery itself, but at its mode: "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" And when for the moment, as St. John tells us, a strange awe fell upon the multitude, and they "went backward and fell to the ground," Jesus, as it were, called in the outshining glories, masking them with the tired and blood-stained humanity that He wore, so stilling the tremor that was upon His enemies, as He nerved the very hands that should take Him. And again, when they do bind Him, He offers no resistance; but when Peter's quick sword flashes from its scabbard, and takes off the right ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, and so one of the leaders in the arrest, Jesus asks for the use of His manacled hand—for so we read the "Suffer ye thus far"—and touching the ear, heals it at once. He Himself is willing to be wounded even unto death, but His alone must be the wounds. His enemies must not share His pain, nor must His disciples pass with Him into this temple of His sufferings; and He even stays to ask for them a free parole: "Let these go their way."

But while for the disciples Jesus has but words of tender rebuke or of prayer, while for Malchus He has a word and a touch of mercy, and while even for Judas He has an endearing epithet, "friend," for the chief priests, captains, and elders He has severer words. They are the ringleaders, the plotters. All this commotion, this needless parade of hostile strength, these superfluous insults are but the foaming of their rabid frenzy, the blossoming of their malicious hate; and turning to them as they stand gloating in their supercilious scorn, He asks, "Are ye come out, as against a

robber, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the Temple, ye stretched not forth your hands against Me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." True words, for they who should have been priests of Heaven are in league with hell, willing ministers of the powers of darkness. And this was indeed their hour, but the hour of their victory would prove the hour of their doom.

St. Luke, as do the other Synoptists, omits the preliminary trial before Annas, the ex-high priest (John xviii. 13), and leads us direct to the palace of Caiaphas, whither they conduct Jesus bound. Instead, however, of pursuing the main narrative, he lingers to gather up the side-lights of the palace-yard, as they cast a lurid light upon the character of Simon. Some time before, Jesus had forewarned him of a coming ordeal, and which He called a Satanic sifting; while only a few hours ago He had prophesied that this night, before the cock should crow twice, Peter would thrice deny Him—a singular prediction, and one which at the time seemed most unlikely, but which proved true to the very letter. After the encounter in the garden, Peter retires from our sight for awhile; but his flight was neither far nor long, for as the procession moves up towards the city Peter and John follow it as a rear-guard, on to the house of Annas, and now to the house of Caiaphas. We need not repeat the details of the story—how John passed him through the door into the inner court, and how he sat, or "stood," as St. John puts it, by the charcoal fire, warming himself with the officers and servants. The differing verbs only show the restlessness of the man, which was a life-long characteristic of Peter, but which would be doubly accentuated here, with suspecting eyes focussed

upon him. Indeed, in the whole scene of the court-yard, as sketched for us in the varying but not discordant narratives of the Evangelists, we may detect the vibrations of constant movement and the ripple-marks of intense excitement.

When challenged the first time, by the maid who kept the door, Peter answered with a sharp, blunt negative: he was not a disciple; he did not even know Him. At the second challenge, by another maid, he replied with an absolute denial, but added to his denial the confirmation of an oath. At the third challenge, by one of the men standing near, he denied as before, but added to his denial both an oath and an anathema. It is rather unfortunate that our version renders it (Matt. xxvi. 74; Mark xiv. 71), "He began to curse and to swear;" for these words have a peculiarly ill savour, a taste of Billingsgate, which the original words have not. To our ear, "to curse and to swear" are the accomplishments of a loose and a foul tongue, which throws out its fires of passion in profanity, or in coarse obscenities, as it revels in immoralities of speech. The words in the New Testament, however, have a meaning altogether different. Here "to swear" means to take an oath, as in our courts of law, or rather to make an affirmation. Even God Himself is spoken of as swearing, as in the song of Zacharias (i. 73), where He is said to have remembered His holy covenant, "the oath which He sware unto Abraham our father." Indeed, this form of speech, the oath or affirmation, had come into too general use, as we may see from the paragraph upon oaths in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 33-37). Jesus here condemned it, it is true, for to Him who was Truth itself our word should be as our bond; but His reference to it shows how prevalent

the custom was, even amongst strict legalists and moralists. When, then, Peter "swore," it does not mean that he suddenly became profane, but simply that he backed up his denial with a solemn affirmation. So, too, with the word "curse;" it has not our modern meaning. Literally rendered, it would be, "He put himself under an anathema," which "anathema" was the bond or penalty he was willing to pay if his words should not be true. In Acts xxiii. 12 we have the cognate word, where the "anathema" was, "They would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul." The "curse" thus was nothing immoral in itself; it was a form of speech even the purest might use, a sort of underlined affirmation.

But though the language of Peter was neither profane nor foul, though in his "oath" and in his "curse" there is nothing for which the purest taste need apologize, yet here was his sin, his grievous sin: he made use of the oath and the curse to back up a deliberate and cowardly lie, even as men to-day will kiss the book to make God's Word of truth a cover for perjury. How shall we explain the sad fall of this captain-disciple, who was first and foremost of the Twelve? Were these denials but the "wild and wandering cries" of some delirium? We find that Peter's lips did sometimes throw off unreasoning and untimely words, speaking like one in a dream, as he proposed the three tabernacles on the mount, "not knowing what he said." But this is no delirium, no ecstasy; his mind is clear as the sky overhead, his thought bright and sharp as was his sword just now. No, it was not a failure in the reason; it was a sadder failure in the heart. Of physical courage Simon had an abundance, but he was somewhat deficient in moral

courage. His surname "Peter" was as yet but a forename, a prophecy; for the "rock"-granite was yet in a state of flux, pliant, somewhat wavering, and too easily impressed. It must "be dipped in baths of hissing tears" ere it hardens into the foundation-rock for the new temple. In the garden he was too ready, too brave. "Shall we smite with the sword?" he asked, matching the "we," which numbered two swords, against a whole Roman cohort; but that was in the presence of his Master, and in the consciousness of strength which that Presence gave. It is different now. His Master is Himself a bound and helpless Prisoner. His own sword is taken from him, or, which is the same thing, it is ordered to its sheath. The bright dream of temporal sovereignty, which like a beautiful mirage had played on the horizon of his thought, had suddenly faded, withdrawing itself into the darkness. Simon is disappointed, perplexed, bewildered, and with hopes shattered, faith stunned, and love itself in a momentary conflict with self-love, he loses heart and becomes demoralized, his better nature falling to pieces like a routed army.

Such were the conditions of Peter's denial, the strain and pressure under which his courage and his faith gave way, and almost before he knew it he had thrice denied his Lord, tossing away the Christ he would die for on his cold, impetuous words, as, with a tinge of disrespect in his tone and word, he called Him "the Man." But hardly had the denial been made and the anathema been said when suddenly the cock crew. It was but the familiar call of an unwitting bird, but it smote upon Peter's ear like a near clap of thunder; it brought to his mind those words of his Master, which he had thought were uncertain parable, but which he

finds now were certain prophecy, and thus let in a rush of sweet, old-time memories. Conscience-stricken, and with a load of terrible guilt pressing upon his soul, he looks up timidly towards the Lord he has forsworn. Will He deny *him*, on one of His bitter "woes" casting him down to the Gehenna he deserves? No; Jesus looks upon Peter; nay, He even "turns" round toward him, that He may look; and as Peter saw that look, the face all streaked with blood and lined with an unutterable anguish, when he felt that glance fixed upon him of an upbraiding but a pitying and forgiving love, that look of Jesus pierced the inmost soul of the denying, agnostic disciple, breaking up the fountains of his heart, and sending him out to weep "bitterly." That look was the supreme moment in Peter's life. It forgave, while it rebuked him; it passed through his nature like refining fire, burning out what was weak, and selfish and sordid, and transforming Simon, the boaster, the man of words, into Peter, the man of deeds, the man of "rock."

But if in the outer court truth is thrown to the winds, within the palace justice herself is parodied. It would seem as if the first interview of Caiaphas with Jesus were private, or in the presence at most of a few personal attendants. But at this meeting, as the High Priest of the New was arraigned before the high priest of the Old Dispensation, nothing was elicited. Questioned as to His disciples and as to His doctrine, Jesus maintained a dignified silence, only speaking to remind His pseudo-judge that there were certain rules of procedure with which he himself was bound to comply. He would not enlighten him; what He had said He had said openly, in the Temple; and if he wished to know he must appeal to those who heard Him, he must

call his witnesses; an answer which brought Him a sharp and cruel blow from one of the officers, the first of a sad rain of blows which bruised His flesh and made His visage marred more than any man's.

The private interview ended, the doors were thrown open to the mixed company of chief priests, elders, and scribes, probably the same as had witnessed the arrest, with others of the council who had been hastily summoned, and who were known to be avowedly hostile to Jesus. It certainly was not a properly constituted tribunal, a council of the Sanhedrim, which alone had the power to adjudicate on questions purely religious. It was rather a packed jury, a Star Chamber of self-appointed assessors. With the exception that witnesses were called (and even these were "false," with discrepant stories which neutralized their testimony and made it valueless), the whole proceedings were a hurried travesty of justice, unconstitutional, and so illegal. But such was the virulent hate of the hierarchy of the Temple, they were prepared to break through all legalities to gain their end; yea, they would even have broken the tables of the law themselves, if they might only have stoned the Nazarene with the fragments, and then have buried Him under the rude cairn. The only testimony they could find was that He had said He would destroy the temple made with hands, and in three days build another made without hands (Mark xiv. 58); and even in this the statements of the two witnesses did not agree, while both were garbled misrepresentations of the truth.

Hitherto Jesus had remained silent, and when Caiaphas sprang from his seat, asking, "Answerest Thou nothing?" seeking to extract some broken speech by the pressure of an imperious mien and browbeating

words, Jesus answered by a majestic silence. Why should He cast His pearls before these swine, who were even now turning upon Him to rend Him? But when the high priest asked, "Art Thou the Christ?" Jesus replied, "If I tell you, ye will not believe: and if I ask you, ye will not answer. But from henceforth shall the Son of man be seated at the right hand of the power of God;" thus anticipating His enthronement far above all principalities and powers, in His eternal reign. The words "Son of man" struck with loud vibrations upon the ears of His enraged jurors, suggesting the antithesis, and immediately all speak at once, as they clamour, "Art Thou, then, the Son of God?" a question which Caiaphas repeats as an adjuration, and which Jesus answers with a brief, calm, "Ye say that I am." It was a Divine confession, at once the confession of His Messiahship and a confession of His Divinity. It was all that His enemies wanted; there was no need of further witnesses, and Caiaphas rent his clothes and asked his echoes of what the blasphemer was worthy? And opening their clenched teeth, his echoes shouted, "Death!"

The lingering dawn had not broken when the high priest and his barking hounds had run their Prey down to death—that is, as far as they were allowed to go; and as the meeting of the full council could not be held till the broad daylight, the men who have Jesus in charge extemporize a little interlude of their own. Setting Jesus in the midst, they mock Him, and make sport of Him, heaping upon that Face, still streaked with its sweat of blood, all the indignities a malign ingenuity can suggest. Now they "cover His face" (Mark xiv. 65), throwing around it one of their loose robes; now they "blindfold" Him, and then strike

"Him on the face" (xxii. 64), as they derisively ask that He will prophecy who smote Him; while, again, they "spit in His face" (Matt. xxvi. 67), besmearing it with the venom of unclean, hissing lips! And amid it all the patient Sufferer answers not a word; He is silent, dumb, the Lamb before His shearers.

Soon as the day had fairly broke, the Sanhedrists, with the chief priests, meet in full council, to give effect to the decision of the earlier conclave; and since it is not in their power to do more, they determine to hand Jesus over to the secular power, going to Pilate in a body, thus giving their informal endorsement to the demand for His death. So now the scene shifts from the palace of Caiaphas to the Prætorium, a short distance as measured by the linear scale, but a far remove if we gauge thought or if we consider climatic influences. The palace of Caiaphas lay toward the Orient; the Prætorium was a growth of the Occident, a bit of Western life transplanted to the once fruitful, but now sterile East. Within the palace the air was close and mouldy; thought could not breathe, and religion was little more than a mummy, tightly bound by the grave-clothes of tradition, and all scented with old-time cosmetics. Within the Prætorium the atmosphere was at least freer; there was more room to breathe; for Rome was a sort of libertine in religion, finding room within her Pantheon for all the deities of this and almost any other world. In matters of religion the Roman power was perfectly indifferent, her only policy the policy of *laissez faire;* and when Pilate first saw Jesus and His crowd of accusers he sought to dismiss them at once, remitting Him to be judged "according to your law," putting, doubtless, an inflection of contempt upon the "your." It was not

until they had shifted the charge altogether, making it one of sedition instead of blasphemy, as they accuse Jesus of "perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar," that Pilate took the case seriously in hand. But from the first his sympathies evidently were with the strange and lonely Prophet.

Left comparatively alone with Pilate—for the crowd would not risk the defilement of the Prætorium—Jesus still maintained a dignified reserve and silence, not even speaking to Pilate's question of surprise, "Answerest Thou nothing?" Jesus would speak no word in self-defence, not even to take out the twist His accusers had put into His words, as they distorted their meaning. When, however, He was questioned as to His mission and Royalty He spoke directly, as He had spoken before to Caiaphas, not, however, claiming to be King of the Jews, as His enemies asserted, but Lord of a kingdom which was not of this world; that is, not like earthly empires, whose bounds are mountains and seas, and whose thrones rest upon pillars of steel, the carnal weapons which first upbuild, and then support them. He was a King indeed; but His realm was the wide realm of mind and heart; His was a kingdom in which love was law, and love was force, a kingdom which had no limitations of speech, and no bounds, either of time or space.

Pilate was perplexed and awed. Governor though he was, he mentally did homage before the strange Imperator whose nature was imperial, whatever His realm might be. "I find no fault in this Man," he said, attesting the innocence he had discovered in the mien and tones of his Prisoner; but his attestation only awoke a fiercer cry from the chief priests, "that He was a seditious person, stirring up the people, and

preparing insurrection even from Galilee to Jerusalem." The word Galilee caught Pilate's ear, and at once suggested a plan that would shift the responsibility from himself. He would change the *venue* from Judæa to Galilee; and since the Prisoner was a Galilean, he would send Him to the Tetrarch of Galilee, Herod, who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time. It was the stratagem of a wavering mind, of a man whose courage was not equal to his convictions, of a man with a double purpose. He would like to save his Prisoner, but he *must* save himself; and when the two purposes came into collision, as they did soon, the "might" of a timid desire had to give way to the "must" of a prudential necessity; the Christ was pushed aside and nailed to a cross, that Self might survive and reign. And so "Pilate sent Him to Herod."

Herod was proud to have this deference shown him in Jerusalem, and by his rival, too, and "exceeding glad" that, by a caprice of fortune, his long-cherished desire, which had been baffled hitherto, of seeing the Prophet of Galilee, should be realized. He found it, however, a disappointing and barren interview; for Jesus would work no miracle, as he had hoped; He would not even speak. To all the questions and threats of Herod, Jesus maintained a rigid and almost scornful silence; and though to Pilate He had spoken at some length, Jesus would have no intercourse with the murderer of the Baptist. Herod had silenced the Voice of the wilderness; he should not hear the Incarnate Word. Jesus thus set Herod at nought, counting him as a nothing, ignoring him purposely and utterly; and stung with rage that his authority should be thus contemned before the chief priests and scribes, Herod set

his Victim "at nought," mocking Him in coarse banter; and as if the whole proceeding were but a farce, a bit of comedy, he invests Him with one of his glittering robes, and sends the Prophet-King back to Pilate.

For a brief space Jesus finds shelter by the judgment-seat, removed from the presence of His accusers, though still within hearing of their cries, as Pilate himself keeps the wolves at bay. Intensely desirous of acquitting his Prisoner, he leaves the seat of judgment to become His advocate. He appeals to their sense of justice; that Jesus is entirely innocent of any crime or fault. They reply that according to their law He ought to die, because He called Himself the "Son of God." He appeals to their custom of having some prisoner released at this feast, and he suggests that it would be a personal favour if they would permit him to release Jesus. They answer, "Not this man, but Barabbas." He offers to meet them half-way, in a sort of compromise, and out of deference to their wishes he will chastise Jesus if they will consent to let Him go; but it is not chastisement they want—they themselves could have done that—but death. He appeals to their pity, leading Jesus forth, wearing the purple robe, as if to ask, "Is it not enough already?" but they cry even more fiercely for His death. Then he yields so far to their clamour as to deliver up Jesus to be mocked and scourged, as the soldiers play at "royalty," arraying Him in the purple robe, putting a reed in His hand as a mock sceptre, and a crown of thorns upon His head, then turning to smite Him on the head, to spit in His face, and to kneel before Him in mock homage, saluting Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And Pilate allows all this, himself leading Jesus forth in this mock array, as he bids the crowd, "Behold your King!" And why?

has He experienced such a revulsion of feeling towards his Prisoner that he can now vie with the chief priests in his coarse insult of Jesus? Not so; but it is Pilate's last appeal. It is a sop thrown out to the mob, in hopes that it may slake their terrible blood-thirst, a sacrifice of pain and shame which may perhaps prevent the greater sacrifice of life; while at the same time it is an ocular demonstration of the incongruity of their charge; for His Kingship, whatever it might be, was nothing the Roman power had to fear; it was not even to be taken in a serious way; it was a matter for ridicule, and not for revenge, something they could easily afford to play with. But this last appeal was futile as the others had been, and the crowd only became more fierce as they saw in Pilate traces of weakening and wavering. At last the courage of Pilate breaks down utterly before the threat that he will not be Cæsar's friend if he let this man go, and he delivers up Jesus to their will, not, however, before he has called for water, and by a symbolic washing of his hands has thrown back, or tried to throw back, upon his accusers, the crime of shedding innocent blood. Weak, wavering Pilate—

> "Making his high place the lawless perch
> Of winged ambitions;"

overridden by his fears; governor, but governed by his subjects; sitting on the judgment-seat, and then abdicating his position of judge; the personification of law, and condemning the Innocent contrary to the law; giving up to the extremest penalty and punishment One whom he has thrice proclaimed as guiltless, without fault, and that, too, in the face of a Heaven-sent warning dream! In the wild inrush of his fears, which swept over him like an inbreaking sea, his own weak

will was borne down, and reason, right, conscience, all were drowned. Verily Pilate washes his hands in vain; he cannot wipe off his responsibility or wipe out the deep stains of blood.

And now we come to the last act of the strange drama, which the four Evangelists give from their different stand-points, and so with varying but not differing details. We will read it mainly from the narrative of St. Luke. The shadow of the cross has long been a vivid conception of His mind, and again and again we can see its reflection in the current of His clear speech; now, however, it is present to His sight, close at hand, a grim and terrible reality. It is laid upon the shoulder of the Sufferer, and the Victim carries His altar through the streets of the city and up towards the Mount of Sacrifice, until He faints beneath the burden, when the precious load is laid upon Simon the Cyrenian, who, coming out of the country, met the procession as it issued from the gate. It was probably during this halt by the way that the incident occurred, related only by our Evangelist, when the women who followed with the multitude broke out into loud lamentation and weeping, the first expression of human sympathy Jesus has received through all the agonies of the long morning. And even this sympathy He gave back to those who proffered it, bidding these "daughters of Jerusalem" weep not for Him, but for themselves and for their children, because of the day of doom which was fast coming upon their city and on them. Thus Jesus pushes from Him the cup of human sympathy, as afterwards He refused the cup of mingled wine and myrrh: He would drink the bitter draught unsweetened; alone and all unaided He would wrestle with death, and conquer.

It is somewhat singular that none of the Evangelists have left us a clue by which we can recognize, with any certainty, the scene of the Crucifixion. In our thoughts and in our songs Calvary is a mount, towering high among the mounts of God, higher than Sinai itself. And such it is, potentially; for it has the sweep of all the earth, and touches heaven. But the Scriptures do not call it a "mount," but only a "place." Indeed, the name of "Calvary" does not appear in Scripture, except as the Latin translation of the Greek *Kranion*, or the Hebrew *Golgotha*, both of which mean "the place of the skull." All that we can safely say is that it was probably some rounded eminence, as the name would indicate, and as modern explorations would suggest, on the north of the city, near the tomb of Jeremiah.

But if the site of the cross is only given us in a casual way, its position is noted by all the Evangelists with exactness. It was between the crosses of two malefactors or bandits; as St. John puts it, in an emphatic, Divine tautology, "On either side one, and Jesus in the midst." Possibly they intended it as their last insult, heaping shame upon shame; but unwittingly they only fulfilled the Scripture, which had prophesied that He would be "numbered among the transgressors," and that He would make His grave "with the wicked" in His death.

St. Luke omits several details, which St. John, who was an eye-witness, could give more fully; but he stays to speak of the parting of His raiment, and he adds, what the others omit, the prayer for His executioners, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," an incident he probably had heard from one of the band of crucifiers, perhaps the centurion himself.

With a true artistic skill, however, and with brief touches, he draws for us the scene on which all ages will reverently gaze. In the foreground is the cross of Jesus, with its trilingual superscription, "This is the King of the Jews;" while close beside it are the crosses of the thieves, whose very faces St. Luke lights up with life and character. Standing near are the soldiers, relieving the *ennui* with cruel sport, as they rail at the Christ, offering Him vinegar, and bidding Him come down. Then we have the rulers, crowding up near the cross, scoffing, and pelting their Victim with ribald jests, the "people" standing back, beholding; while "afar off," in the distance, are His acquaintance and the women from Galilee. But if our Evangelist touches these incidents lightly, he lingers to give us one scene of the cross in full, which the other Evangelists omit. Has Jesus found an advocate in Pilate? has He found a cross-bearer in the Cyrenian, and sympathisers in the lamenting women? He finds now upon His cross a testimony to His Messiahship more clear and more eloquent than the hieroglyphs of Pilate; for when one of the thieves railed upon Him, shouting out "Christ" in mockery, Jesus made no reply. The other answered for Him, rebuking his fellow, while attesting the innocence of Jesus. Then, with a prayer in which penitence and faith were strangely blended, he turned to the Divine Victim and said, "Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." Rare faith! Through the tears of his penitence, as through lenses of light, he sees the new Dawn to which this fearful night will give birth, the kingdom which is sure to come, and which, coming, will abide, and he salutes the dying One as Christ, the King! Jesus did not reply to the

railer; He received in silence his barbed taunts; but to this cry for mercy Jesus had a quick response—"To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," so admitting the penitent into His kingdom at once, and, ere the day is spent, passing him up to the abodes of the Blessed, even to Paradise itself.

And now there comes the hush of a great silence and the awe of a strange darkness. From the sixth to the ninth hour, over the cross, and the city, and the land, hung the shadow of an untimely night, when the "sun's light failed," as our Evangelist puts it; while in the Temple was another portent, the veil, which was suspended between the Holy Place and the Most Holy, being rent in the midst! The mysterious darkness was but the pall for a mysterious death; for Jesus cried with a loud voice into the gloom, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," and then, as it reads in language which is not applied to mortal man, "He gave up the ghost." He dismissed His spirit, a perfectly voluntary Sacrifice, laying down the life which no man was able to take from Him.

And why? What meant this death, which was at once the end and the crown of His life? What meant the cross, which thus draws to itself all the lines of His earthly life, while it throws its shadow back into the Old Dispensation, over all its altars and its passovers? To other mortals death is but an appendix to the life, a negation, a something we could dispense with, were it possible thus to be exempt from the bond we all must pay to Nature. But not so was it with Jesus. He was born that He might die; He lived that He might die; it was for this hour on Calvary that He came into the world, the Word being made flesh, that the sacred flesh might be transfixed to a

cross, and buried in an earthly grave. Surely, then, it was not *as* man that Jesus died; He died *for* man; He died as the Son of God! And when upon the cross the horror of a great darkness fell upon His soul, and He who had borne every torture that earth could inflict without one murmur of impatience or cry of pain, cried, with a terrible anguish in His voice, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" we can interpret the great horror and the strange cry but in one way: the Lamb of God was bearing away the sin of the world; He was tasting for man the bitter pains of the second death; and as He drinks the cup of the wrath of God against sin He feels passing over Him the awful loneliness of a soul bereft of God, the chill of the "outer darkness" itself. Jesus lived as our Example; He died as our Atonement, opening by His blood the Holiest of all, even His highest heaven.

And so the cross of Jesus must ever remain "in the midst," the one bright centre of all our hopes and all our songs; it must be "in the midst" of our toil, at once our pattern of service and our inspiration. Nay, the cross of Jesus will be "in the midst" of heaven itself, the centre towards which the circles of redeemed saints will bow, and round which the ceaseless "Alleluia" will roll; for what is "the Lamb in the midst of the throne" (Rev. vii. 17) but the cross transfigured, and the Lamb eternally enthroned?

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FIRST LORD'S DAY.

St. Luke xxiv.

THE Sabbath came and went over the grave of its Lord, and silence reigned in Joseph's garden, broken only by the mailed sentinels, who laughed and chatted by the sealed sepulchre. As to the disciples, this "high day" is a *dies non* to them, for the curtain of a deep silence hides them from our view. Did they go up to the Temple to join in the Psalm, how "His mercy endureth for ever"? Scarcely: their thoughts were transfixed to the cross, which haunted them like a horrid dream; its rude dark wood had stunned them for awhile, as it broke down their faith and shattered all their hopes. But if the constellation of the Apostles passes into temporary eclipse, with no beam of inspired light falling upon them, "the women" are not thus hidden, for we read "And on the Sabbath day they rested, according to the commandment." It is true it is but a negative attitude that is portrayed, but it is an exceedingly beautiful one. It is Love waiting upon Duty. The voices of their grief are not allowed to become so excessive and clamorous as to drown the Divine voice, speaking through the ages, "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day;" and even the fragrant offerings of their devotion are set aside, that they may keep inviolate the Sabbath rest.

But if the spices of the women are the spikenard and myrrh of a mingled love and grief, they are at the same time a tacit admission of their error. They prove conclusively that the women, at any rate, had no thought of a resurrection. It appears strange to us that such should be the case, after the frequent references Jesus made to His death and rising again. But evidently the disciples attached to these sayings of Jesus one of those deeper, farther-off meanings which were so characteristic of His speech, interpreting in some mysterious spiritual sense what was intended to be read in a strict literalness. At present nothing could be farther from their thoughts than a resurrection; it had not even occurred to them as a possible thing; and instead of being something to which they were ready to give a credulous assent, or a myth which came all shaped and winged out of their own heated imaginings, it was something altogether foreign to their thoughts, and which, when it did occur, only by many infallible proofs was recognized and admitted into their hearts as truth. And so the very spices the women prepare for the embalming are a silent but a fragrant testimony to the reality of the Resurrection. They show the drift of the disciples' thought, that when the stone was rolled to the door of the sepulchre it shut in to the darkness, and buried, all their hopes. The only Easter they knew, or even dreamed of, was that first and final Easter of the last day.

As soon as the restraint of the Sabbath was over, the women turned again to their labour of love, preparing the ointment and spices for the embalming, and coming with the early dawn to the sepulchre. Though it was 'yet dark," as St. John tells us, they did not anticipate any difficulty from the city gates, for these were left

open both by night and day during the Passover feast; but the thought did occur to them on the way as to how they should roll back the stone, a task for which they had not prepared, and which was evidently beyond their unaided strength. Their question, however, had been answered in anticipation, for when they reached the garden the stone was rolled away, and the sepulchre all exposed. Surprised and startled by the discovery, their surprise deepened into consternation as passing within the sepulchre, they found that the body of Jesus, on which they had come to perform the last kind offices of affection, had disappeared. And how? could there be more than one solution of the enigma? The enemies of Jesus had surely laid violent hands upon the tomb, rifling it of the precious dust they sorrowfully had committed to its keeping, reserving it for fresh indignities. St. John supplements the narrative of our Evangelist, telling how the Magdalene, slipping out from the rest, "ran" back to the city to announce, in half-hysterical speech, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid Him;" for though St. John names but the Magdalene, the "we" implies that she was but one of a group of ministering women, a group that she had abruptly left. The rest lingered by the tomb perplexed, with reason blinded by the whirling clouds of doubt, when suddenly—the "behold" indicates a swift surprise —"two men stood by them in dazzling apparel."

In speaking of them as "two men" probably our Evangelist only intended to call attention to the humanness of their form, as in verse 23 he speaks of the appearance as "a vision of angels." It will be observed, however, that in the New Testament the two words "men" and "angels" are used interchangeably; as in St. Luke vii.

24, Rev. xxii. 8, where the "angels" are evidently men, while in Mark xvi. 5, and again in the verse before us, the so-called "men" are angels. But does not this interchangeable use of the words imply a close relation between the two orders of being? and is it not possible that in the eternal ripenings and evolutions of heaven a perfected humanity may pass up into the angelic ranks? At any rate, we do know that when angels have appeared on earth there has been a strange humanness about them. They have not even had the fictitious wings which poetry has woven for them; they have nearly always appeared wearing the human face Divine, and speaking with the tones and in the tongues of men, as if it were their native speech.

But if their form is earthly, their dress is heavenly. Their garments flash and glitter like the robes of the transfigured Christ; and awed by the supernatural portent, the women bow down their faces to the earth. "Why," asked the angels, "seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." Even the angels are not allowed to disclose the secret of His resurrection life, or to tell where He may be found, but they announce the fact that they are not at liberty to explain. "He is not here; He is risen," is the Gospel of the angels, a Gospel whose prelude they themselves have heard, but, alas! forgotten; and since Heaven does not reveal what by searching we ourselves may find out, the angels throw them back upon their own recollections, recalling the words Jesus Himself had spoken, and which, had they been understood and remembered, would have lighted up the

empty sepulchre and have solved the great mystery. And how much we lose because we do not remember, or if remembering, we do not believe! Divine words have been spoken, and spoken to us, but to our ear, dulled by unbelief, they have come as empty sound, all inarticulate, and we have said it was some thunder in the sky or the voices of a passing wind. How many promises, which, like the harps of God, would have made even our wildernesses vocal, have we hung up, sad and silent, on the willows of the "strange lands"! If we only "remembered" the words of the Lord Jesus, if they became to us real and eternally true, instead of being the unreal voices of a dream, those words would be, not "the distant lamps" of Heaven, but near at hand, lighting up all dark places, because throwing their light within, turning even the graves of our buried hopes into sanctuaries of joy and praise!

And so the women, instead of embalming their Lord, carried their spices back unused. Not unused, however, for in the spices and ointments the Living One did not need their own names were embalmed, a fragrant memory. Coming to the tomb, as they thought, to do homage to a dead Christ, the Magdalene, and Mary, and Johanna, and Salome found a Christ who had conquered death, and at the same time found an immortality for themselves; for the fragrance of their thought, which was not permitted to ripen into deeds, has filled the whole world.

Returning to the city, whither the Magdalene had outrun them, they announced to the rest, as she had done to Peter and John, the fact of the empty grave; but they completed the story with the narrative of the angelic vision and the statement that Jesus had risen. So little, however, were the disciples predisposed to

receive the tidings of a resurrection, they would not admit the fact even when attested by at least four witnesses, but set it down as idle, silly talk, something which was not only void of truth, but void of sense. Only Peter and John of the Apostles, as far as we know, visited the sepulchre, and even they doubted, though they found the tomb empty and the linen clothes carefully wrapped up. They "believed" that the body had disappeared, but, as St. John tells us, "as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead" (St. John xx. 9); and as they leave the empty grave to return to their own home, they only "wondered at that which was come to pass." It was an enigma they could not solve; and though the Easter morning had now fully broke, the day which should light all days, as it drew to itself the honours and songs of the Sabbath, yet to the minds and hearts of the Apostles it was "yet dark;" the glory of the Lord had not yet risen upon them.

And now comes one of those beautiful pictures, peculiar to St. Luke, as he lights up the Judæan hills with a soft afterglow, an afterglow which at the same time is the aurora of a new dawn. It was in the afternoon of that first Lord's day, when two disciples set out from Jerusalem for Emmaus, a village, probably the modern Khamasa, sixty furlongs from the city. Who the two disciples were we cannot say, for one is unnamed, while the other bears a name, Cleopas, we do not meet with elsewhere, though its Greek origin would lead us to infer that he was some Gentile proselyte who had attached himself to Jesus. As to the second, we have not even the clue of an obscure name with which to identify him, and in this somewhat strange anonymity some expositors have thought they detected the shadow

of the Evangelist, Luke, himself. The supposition is not an impossible one; for though St. Luke was not an eye-witness from the beginning, he might have witnessed some of the closing scenes of the Divine life; while the very minuteness of detail which characterizes his story would almost show that if not himself a participant, he was closely related to those who were; but had St. Luke himself been the favoured one, it is scarcely likely that he would have omitted this personal testimony when speaking of the "many infallible proofs" of His resurrection.

Whoever the two might be, it is certain that they enjoyed the esteem and confidence of the disciples, having free access, even at untimely hours, to the Apostolic circle, while the fact that Jesus Himself sought their company, and selected them to such honours, shows the high place which was accorded to them in the Divine regard.

We are not apprised of the object of their journey; indeed, they themselves seem to have lost sight of that in the gleams of glory which, all unexpected, fell across their path. It is not unlikely that it was connected with recent events; for now that the central Sun, around whom their lives revolved, has disappeared, will not those lives necessarily take new directions, or drift back into the old orbits? But whatever their purposes might be, their thoughts are retrospective rather than prospective; for while their faces are set towards Emmaus, and their feet are steadily measuring off the furlongs of the journey, their thoughts are lingering behind, clinging to the dark crest of Calvary, as the cloud-pennon clings to the Alpine peak. They can speak but of one theme, "these things which have happened:" the One whom they took to be the Christ,

to whom their hearts had been so strangely drawn; His character, miracles, and words; the ignominious Death, in which that Life, with all their hopes, was quenched; and then the strange tidings which had been brought by the women, as to how they had found the grave empty, and how they had seen a vision of angels. The word "questioned together" generally implies a difference of opinion, and refers to the cross-questioning of disputants; but in this case it probably referred only to the innumerable questions the report of the Resurrection would raise in their minds, the honest doubts and difficulties with which they felt themselves compelled to grapple.

It was while they were discussing these new problems, walking leisurely along the road—for men walk heavily when weighted at the heart—a Stranger overtook and joined them, asking, after the usual salutation, which would not be omitted, "What communications are these that ye have one with another, as ye walk?" The very form of the question would help to disguise the familiar voice, while the changed "form" of which St. Mark speaks would somewhat mask the familiar features; but at the same time it would appear that there was a supernatural holding of their eyes, as if a dusky veil were wrapped about the Stranger. His question startled them, even as a voice from another world, as, indeed, it seemed; and stopping suddenly, they turned their "sad" faces to the Stranger in a momentary and silent astonishment, a silence which Cleopas broke by asking, "Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem, and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days?" a double question, to which the stranger replied with the brief interrogative, "What things?" It needed no more than

that solitary word to unseal the fountain of their lips for the clouds which had broken so wildly and darkly over Calvary had filled their hearts with an intense and bitter grief, which longed for expression, even for the poor relief of words. And so they break in together with their answer (the pronoun is changed now), "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel. Yea, and beside all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass. Moreover certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb; and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them that were with us went to the tomb, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw not."

It is the impetuous language of intense feeling, in which hope and despair strike alternate chords. In the first strain Jesus of Nazareth is lifted high; He is a Prophet mighty in word and deed; then He is stricken down, condemned to death, and crucified. Again, hope speaks, recalling the bright dream of a redemption for Israel; but having spoken that word, Hope herself goes aside to weep by the grave where her Redeemer was hurriedly buried. Still again is the glimmer of a new light, as the women bring home the message of the angels; but still again the light sets in darkness, a gloom which neither the eyes of Reason nor of Faith could as yet pierce; for "Him they saw not" marks the totality of the eclipse, pointing to a void of darkness, a firmament without a sun or star.

But incidentally, in the swift current of their speech, we catch a reflection of the Christ as He appeared to their minds. He was indeed a Prophet, second to none, and in their hope He was more, for He was the Redeemer of Israel. It is evident the disciples had not yet grasped the full purport of the Messianic mission. Their thought was hazy, obscure, like the vision of men walking in a mist. The Hebrew dream of a temporal sovereignty seems to have been a prevailing, perhaps *the* prevailing force in their minds, the attraction which drew and cheered them on. But their Redeemer was but a local, temporal one, who will restore the kingdom to Israel; He was not yet the Redeemer of the world, who should save His people from their sins. The "regeneration," as they fondly called it, the "new creation," was purely national, when out of the chaos of Roman irruptions their Hebrew paradise will come. For one thing, the disciples were too near the Divine life to see its just and large proportions. They must stand back from it the distance of a Pentecost; they must look on it through their lenses of flame, before they can take in the profound meaning of that Life, or the awful mystery of that Death. At present their vision is out of focus, and all they can see is the blurred and shadowy outline of the reality, the temporal rather than the spiritual, a redeemed nationality rather than a redeemed and regenerated humanity.

The risen Jesus, for such the Stranger was, though they knew it not, listened to their requiem patiently and wonderingly, glad to find within their hearts such deep and genuine love, which even the cross and the grave had not been able to extinguish. The men themselves were true, even though their views were

somewhat warped—the refractions of their Hebrew atmosphere. And Jesus leads them in thought to those "shining uplands" of truth; as it were, spurring them on, by a sharp though kind rebuke, to the heights where Divine thoughts and purposes move on to their fulfilment. "O foolish men," He said, "and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?" They thought He was some stranger in Jerusalem, yet He knows their prophets better than themselves; and hark, He puts in a word they had feared to use. They only called Him "Jesus of Nazareth;" they did not give Him that higher title of "the Christ" which they had freely used before. No; for the cross had rudely shattered and broken that golden censer, in which they had been wont to burn a royal incense. But here the Stranger recasts their broken, golden word, burning its sweet, Divine incense even in presence of the cross, calling the Crucified the "Christ"! Verily, this Stranger has more faith than they; and they still their garrulous lips, which speak so randomly, to hear the new and august Teacher, whose voice was an echo of the Truth, if not the Truth itself!

"And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." It will be observed that our Evangelist uses a peculiar word in speaking of this Divine exposition. He calls it an "interpretation," a word used in the New Testament only in the sense of translating from one language to another, from the unknown to the known tongue. And such, indeed, it was; for they had read the Scriptures but in part, and so misread them. They had thrown upon those

Scriptures the projections of their own hopes and illusions; while other Scriptures, those relating to the sufferings of Christ, were set back, out of sight, or if heard at all, they were only the voice of an unknown tongue, a *vox et preterea nihil.* So Jesus interprets to them the voices of this unknown tongue. Beginning at Moses, He shows, from the types, the prophecies, and the Psalms, how that the Christ must suffer and die, ere the glories of His kingdom can begin; that the cross and the grave both lay in the path of the Redeemer, as the bitter and prickly calyx out of which the "glories" should unfold themselves. And thus, opening their Scriptures, putting in the crimson lens of the blood, as well as the chromatic lens of the Messianic glory, the disciples find the cross all transfigured, inwoven in God's eternal purpose of redemption; while the sufferings of Christ, at which they had stumbled before, they now see were part of the eternal plan of mercy, a Divine "ought," a great necessity.

They had now reached Emmaus, the limit of their journey, but the two disciples cannot lose the company of One whose words have opened to them a new and a bright world; and though He was evidently going on farther, they constrained Him to abide with them, as it was towards evening and the day was far spent. And He went in to tarry with them, though not for long. Sitting down to meat, the Stranger Guest, without any apology, takes the place of the host, and blessing the bread, He breaks and gives to them. Was it the uplifted face threw them back on the old, familiar days? or did they read the nail-mark in His hand? We do not know; but in an instant the veil in which He had enfolded Himself was withdrawn, and they knew Him: it was the Lord Himself, the

risen Jesus! In a moment the hush of a great awe fell upon them, and before they had time to embrace Him whom they had loved so passionately, indeed before their lips could frame an exclamation of surprise, He had vanished; He "became invisible" to them, as it reads, passing out of their sight like a dissolving cloud. And when they did recover themselves it was not to speak His name—there was no need of that—but to say one to another, "Was not our heart burning within, us while He spake to us in the way, while He opened to us the Scriptures?" It was to them a bright Apocalypse, "the Revelation of Jesus Christ," who was dead, and is alive for evermore; and all-forgetful of their errand, and though it is evening, they leave Emmaus at once, their winged feet not heeding the sixty furlongs now, as they haste to Jerusalem to announce to the eleven, and to the rest, that Jesus has indeed arisen, and has appeared unto them.

Returning to Jerusalem, they go direct to the well-known trysting-place, where they find the Apostles ("the eleven" as the band was now called, though, as St. John informs us, Thomas was not present) and others gathered for their evening meal, and speaking of another and later appearance of Jesus to Simon, which must have occurred during their absence from the city; and they add to the growing wonder by telling of their evening adventure, and how Jesus was known of them in breaking of bread. But while they discussed the subject—for the majority were yet in doubt as to the reality of the appearances—Jesus Himself stood before them, passing through the fastened door; for the same fear that shut the door would securly lock it. Though giving to them the old-time salutation, "Peace be to you," it did not calm the

unrest and agitation of their soul; the chill of a great fear fell upon them, as the spectral Shadow, as they thought it, stood before them. "Why are ye troubled?" asks Jesus, "and wherefore do reasonings arise in your hearts?" for they fairly trembled with fear, as the word would imply. "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold Me having." He then extended His hands, drew back His robe from His feet, and, as St. John says, uncovered His side, that they might see the wounds of the nails and the spear, and that by these visible, tangible proofs they might be convinced of the reality of His Resurrection body. It was enough; their hearts in an instant swung round from an extreme of fear to an extreme of joy, a sort of wild joy, in which Reason for the moment became confused, and Faith bewildered. But while the heavenly trance is yet upon them Jesus recalls them to earthly things, asking if they have any meat; and when they give Him a piece of a broiled fish, some of the remnants of their own repast, He takes and eats before them all; not that now He needed the sustenance of earthly food, in His resurrection life, but that by this simple act He might put another seal upon His true humanity. It was a kind of sacrament, showing forth His oneness with His own; that on the farther side of the grave, in His exaltation, as on this, in His humiliation, He was still the "Son of man," interested in all things, even the commonplaces, of humanity.

The interview was not for long, for the risen Christ dwelt apart from His disciples, coming to them at uncertain times and only for brief spaces. He lingers, however, now, to explain to the eleven, as before to the two, the great mystery of the Redemption. He

opens their minds, that the truth may pass within. Gathering up the lamps of prophecy suspended through the Scriptures, He turns their varying lights upon Himself, the ME of whom they testify. He shows them how it is written in their law that the Christ must suffer, the Christ must die, the Christ must rise again the third day, and "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." And then He gave to these preachers of repentance and remission the promise of which the Book of the Acts is a fulfilment and enlargement, the "promise of the Father," which is the gift of the Holy Ghost. It was the prophecy of the Pentecost, the first rustle of the mighty rushing wind, that Divine breath which comes to all who will receive it.

Our Evangelist passes in silence other appearances of the Resurrection Life, those forty days in which, by His frequent manifestations, He was training His disciples to trust in His unseen Presence. He only in a few closing words tells of the Ascension; how, near Bethany, He was parted from them, and taken up into heaven, throwing down benedictions from His uplifted hands even as He went; and how the disciples returned to Jerusalem, not sorrowing, as men bereaved, but with great joy, having learned now to endure and rejoice as seeing Him who is invisible, the unseen but ever-present Christ. That St. Luke omits the other Resurrection appearances is probably because he intended to insert them in his prelude to the Acts of the Apostles, which he does, as he joins his second treatise to the first. Nor is it altogether an incidental coincidence that as he writes his later story he begins at Jerusalem, ingering in the upper room which was the

wind-rocked cradle of the Church, and inserting as key-words of the new story these four words from the old: Repentance, Remission, Promise, Power. The two books are thus one, a seamless robe, woven for the living Christ, the one giving us the Christ of the Humiliation, the other the Christ of the Exaltation, who speaks now from the upper heavens, and whose power is the power of the Holy Ghost.

And was it altogether undesigned that our Evangelist, omitting other appearances of the forty days, yet throws such a wealth of interest and of colouring into that first Easter day, filling it up from its early dawn to its late evening? We think not. He is writing to and for the Gentiles, whose Sabbaths are not on the last but on the first day of the week, and he stays to picture for us that first Lord's day, the day chosen by the Lord of the Sabbath for this high consecration. And as the Holy Church throughout all the world keeps her Sabbaths now, her anthems and songs are a sweet incense burned by the door of the empty sepulchre; for, "The light which threw the glory of the Sabbath into the shade was the glory of the Risen Lord."

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